

West Hill Park School

Inspection report for boarding school

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| Inspector | Lynda Mosling |
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

| | |
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| Outstanding: | this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality |
| Good: | this aspect of the provision is strong |
| Satisfactory: | this aspect of the provision is sound |
| Inadequate: | this aspect of the provision is not good enough |

Service information

Brief description of the service

West Hill Park is an independent co-educational preparatory school for children from two and a half until 13 years. The boarding accommodation is available to young people from seven to 13 years. There are currently approximately 35 boarders, most of whom go home for one day at the weekend. Flexible boarding is also available. The school is set in 26 acres of grounds close to the town of Titchfield, Hampshire. It offers nursery, pre-preparatory and preparatory school. The grounds include a woodland, playing fields, horse riding school, floodlit astro-pitch and an indoor swimming pool.

Summary

This is a key inspection covering all of the key National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. The school provides good care to a range of full, weekly and flexi boarders. The school is child focused and provides a good balance between academic achievement and enjoyable experiences. Boarders say they have fun at the school and enjoy staying overnight. The school is excellent at promoting young people's health needs, including a healthy eating programme. The boarding accommodation is basic rather than homely. The outside facilities are extensive and provide a good range of activities for the young people. There is good communication between the staff and young people.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection a number of recommendations were made. These have been addressed by the school. The first recommendation was to ensure appropriate checks on staff were taken up. The recruitment processes are now more thorough ensuring criminal record bureau checks are completed for all employees. These are up-dated every three years. The process used for recruitment ensures young people's safety is a priority. The second recommendation was for parental consent for all medical treatment and medication administration to be sought and records kept on the young people's personal records. This now happens and ensures parents are fully aware of the responsibilities of the school for their child whilst they are boarding. A complaints procedure for parents was recommended and has now been developed to record complaints, detail action taken and provide clear outcomes. This is well used by parents who use it to raise a range of issues about the way the school delivers its service. Complaints about the boarding house are rare as parents have open communication with the boarding staff and deal with any concerns on a day to day basis. It was also recommended that the school familiarise themselves with the new legislation regarding child protection. This has happened and training on child protection is planned for all school staff. This has helped raise the awareness of the school's responsibilities for young people's safety.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' health is promoted by the existence of a range of policies and procedures and the employment of a qualified school nurse and three matrons. Access to minor medical treatment and advice is readily available at all times. Young people's health needs are identified with the help of the parents and a plan of how to meet those needs is clearly stated on young people's

files. Special needs such as allergies are extremely well provided for and the knowledge passed on to those who most need to know. For example, there is a particularly useful photographic record of the young people with food allergies which is shared with kitchen staff to minimise the risk of allergic reactions. The school has a nut free policy. Parents are fully involved in discussion about boarders' ill health and have the option to care for them at home if they become ill. The sick bay is comfortable, clean and is constantly manned by the nurse or matron when in use. Young people feel well looked after when they are poorly and have access to all the facilities they need. The storage and administration of medication is safe and well recorded. Prescribed medication is checked by the school nurse daily. Access to specialist services such as dentists and opticians is usually managed by the parents, but can be arranged by the school if more convenient. Young people are accompanied to the doctor by the school nurse if parents are unavailable. Food is a particular strength of the school. There is a wide choice of food at the main meal including vegetarian options. Cold and hot choices are available for each course. Young people have been consulted about their likes and dislikes. The caterer ensures the menu is appropriate for the different ages of children provided for. Fresh fruit and vegetables are sourced locally. Staff sit with the young people at each meal and sensitively monitor their eating habits so that they can alert parents if a problem arises. Meals are sociable relaxed experiences with lots of communication between staff and young people. Meals are provided at regular intervals and young people said they are never hungry.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Boarders do not feel bullied within the school. There is a clear anti-bullying policy and an expectation that young people and staff will respect each other. Thoughtless action is discouraged and apologies encouraged. The staff have good knowledge of each of the boarders and can spot any changes in behaviour that may indicate problems. All staff have had child protection training and feel confident about spotting the signs and symptoms. Appropriate action was taken in the past when a concern was raised. Staff feel a keen duty to protect the young people in their care. Boarders said they can talk to a range of people if they are unhappy but said they feel safe with all of the staff. A missing persons procedure is set out in the policies and there are good procedures in place to ensure the school knows who is on the premises at any time. This is particularly important now that flexi - boarding has become popular. There are clearly marked walking and parking areas in the grounds, with pedestrian crossings at frequent intervals. Rules about only using playground equipment such as swings with adult supervision are well known by young people. Use of high risk activities such as swimming and horse riding are only allowed by arrangement and under the supervision of someone trained to provide that activity. These steps minimise the likelihood of accidents. There are clear policies on behaviour, discipline and sanctions. These are written in a booklet given to all staff and parents. Young people have access to the school rules and permitted sanctions in their handbook and school organiser. No corporal punishment is permitted. Young people said sanctions are usually earlier bedtimes or restriction of television. They believe the sanctions are fair. Boarders can raise issues of concern in the suggestions box, in person with any of the staff and at the weekly meetings for boarders. Suggestions are followed up and there are records of subsequent action taken. Young people are confident that they are listened to and have no difficulty in communicating their views. They expect to be consulted when any changes are taking place. Parents complaints procedures are well advertised and the records indicate complaints are dealt with quickly, usually by the head teacher or deputy. No complaints have been received by Ofsted regarding the school. Boarders' safety from fire has been well considered by the school.

There are full fire evacuations at the start of each term to ensure young people know where the fire exits are and how to safely leave the building. Full fire assessments have been undertaken and plans are in place to meet all the recommendations including the installation of more fire doors. Activities in and out of the school are risk assessed by the person leading the activity. High risk activities are signed off by the head teacher. The risk assessments are clear, assesses the grade of risk, how this can be minimised and managed. Particular vulnerabilities are highlighted and considered as part of this process. Procedures for safe recruitment of staff have been up-dated, including up-to-date criminal record bureau checks. These are renewed on a three yearly basis. Any concerns arising from a check are taken seriously and a decision is taken about suitability by the head teacher. The safety of the young people in the school and boarding house is seen as a priority. Boarders' accommodation is for their sole use and there are strict rules about access to the boarding house. There are tight lock up procedures and the use of key pad entrances on school premises. Community groups using the school during evenings and weekends are made aware of the rules regarding access. Young people know that they will be called in from unsupervised play as the light fades and that they will be accompanied during any outing off of the school site to ensure their safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There are a range of activities for boarders to enjoy during their free time including sports, arts and crafts, music and theatre, walking and trips to local attractions. Once a week there is a fun night for boarders which attracts a number of flexi-boarders. Special activities such as quizzes, disco-dancing and fancy dress competitions are enjoyed during these evenings. There is a good balance between organised activities and young people amusing themselves. The reason given by the young people for wanting to board was 'we have lots of fun and can mess about with our friends'. Boarders feel they can talk to any member of the staff group. They each have a school tutor who develops very good knowledge of the individual needs of each young person. There is good communication between the school and the boarding house and any concern, or need for monitoring, is passed on. The school has an equal opportunity policy. There is no entrance examination and pupils and boarders from all backgrounds are welcomed. Academic success, whilst encouraged, is not the only aim of the school. Enjoyment, personal achievement and social development is also seen as important. The school do take young people who have parents living abroad and they are sensitive to the additional needs and vulnerabilities of these children. Young people are treated with respect by the staff and individual talents, skills and interests are recognised and celebrated. All pupils, including boarders have a homework/study time in their tutor groups at the end of the school day. This ensures everyone has equal opportunity to study, receive tuition and support and be free to enjoy their free time at home or in the boarding house. The young people appear to enjoy this definite boundary between school and home time. It has improved the standard of completed homework. There are a range of safe recreational areas for boarders to use. There are common rooms for boarders use and a basement with a kitchen and large play spaces. Young people do not find the basement area attractive and see it as a wasted opportunity. They would like it developed into an fun activity area with games and child friendly equipment.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There is a suggestions box, and weekly meetings, in the boarding house to encourage young people to make their views known. Young people enjoy open dialogue with staff and are consulted about things that effect their boarding experience. Contact with parents is easy and unrestricted. Boarders can use the house telephone and computers to keep in touch. Most boarders return home at the weekend and therefore do not feel isolated from their family or friends. Many families live locally and make frequent visits to the school to see their children and speak to the staff. Staff are very aware of the importance of good communication with parents and keep in close contact with them. Relationships between boarders and staff are friendly and relaxed. All meals are shared with staff and this gives an opportunity to chat with one another. There is a good balance between control and open expression with young people obviously enjoying their time with the staff. The ethos of the school is child centred and the young people are treated with respect and tolerance.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The dormitories are clean, heated and have suitable lighting. The area is rather sparse in terms of decoration and comfortable furnishings, particularly in the male dormitories. Young people said their beds were comfortable and had enough space around them. Bedding is appropriate and changed weekly. There is access to additional bedding if required. There is limited space to hang clothes. Bedrooms are allocated according to gender and age and young people can request a change of dormitory. There are sufficient toilet and washing facilities for the number of boarders and these are separated by gender. The female facilities are more domestic than those in the male areas where there is a large room with many adjoining basins. Different ages of boarders use the facilities at different times so there is rarely any need to queue. Whilst the accommodation meets basic standards the overall impression is rather stark and does not provide a homely environment for the boarders .

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The boarding house has a statement of purpose that sets out the aims of the house, the ethos of the school and expectations of the pupils. In addition there is a glossy prospectus that clearly outlines all the services offered by the school, including a section on boarding. There is a school website and information is available to parents, young people and interested others. All pupils are also given a school organiser in which the school rules are published and helpful hints are given. There is plenty of information available to help parents and young people decide whether the school offers the service they are looking for. Risk assessment for all activities is well covered by the school and clear records are kept. Knowledge of individual young people's needs is good and ensures particular vulnerabilities are highlighted and considered. The head-teacher monitors the accidents, incidents and sanctions in the boarding house and picks up any patterns or inconsistencies. These are then discussed with the staff involved. The head-teacher is clearly seen as someone who is aware of what is going on throughout the school. There are sufficient staff on duty to provide safe care to the boarders. A staff rota showing who is on duty is clearly displayed and ensures the boarders know who is available to them. The rota is made up of at least one of the matrons, the school nurse, teaching staff with boarding duties, and gap year students. Boarders enjoy the range of staff provided and quickly learn the different skills and preferences of each individual. There are additional staff living on the school premises who can be called upon in an emergency. Support and supervision of boarders is available throughout

the night by ringing a bell. Young people said the staff response is "quick and kind". All boarding staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They undertake a period of induction when they start and are supervised by the house master. School policies on behaviour, discipline and sanctions are made available to all staff working in the boarding house and ensures a consistent approach to the young people. There is a shared belief amongst the staff that boarders are well looked after and that the availability of boarding adds value to the school.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

| Standard | Action | Due date |
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop a pro-forma of identifying information to use in the event of any young person going missing (Standard 3.9)
- develop the basement activity area for the use of pupils and boarders (Standard 46)
- up-grade the dormitories to provide appropriate accommodation for the boarders (Standard 40)

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for boarding school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders' health is promoted (NMS 6)
- safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records (NMS 7)
- boarders' receive first aid and health care as necessary (NMS 15)
- boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill (NMS 16)
- boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal problems (NMS 17)
- boarders receive good quality catering provision (NMS 24)
- boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals (NMS 25)
- boarders are suitably accommodated when ill (NMS 48)
- boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered (NMS 49).

Ofsted considers 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders are protected from bullying (NMS 2)
- boarders are protected from abuse (NMS 3)
- use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate (NMS 4)
- boarders' complaints are responded to appropriately (NMS 5)
- the operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare (NMS 13)
- boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school (NMS 22)
- boarders are protected from the risk of fire (NMS 26)
- the welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school (NMS 28)
- boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities (NMS 29)
- boarders' personal privacy is respected (NMS 37)
- there is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders (NMS 38)
- boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete recruitment checking procedures; all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises are supervised (NMS 39)
- boarders have their own accommodation, which is secure from public intrusion (NMS 41)
- boarders are protected from safety hazards (NMS 47)

Ofsted considers 2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders have access to a range and choice of activities (NMS 11)
- boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination (NMS 18)
- boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands (NMS 27)
- boarders have satisfactory provision to study (NMS 43)
- boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas (NMS 46)

Ofsted considers 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.

Annex A

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school (NMS 12)
- boarders receive personal support from staff (NMS 14)
- boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families (NMS 19)
- new boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in (NMS 21)
- boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school (NMS 30)
- there are sound relationships between staff and boarders (NMS 36)

Ofsted considers 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders' possessions and money are protected (NMS 20)
- boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation (NMS 40)
- boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation (NMS 42)
- boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities (NMS 44)
- boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day (NMS 45)
- boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school (NMS 50)

Ofsted considers 51 the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- a suitable statement of the school's principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff (NMS 1)
- there is clear leadership of boarding in the school (NMS 8)
- crises affecting boarders' welfare are managed effectively (NMS 9)
- the school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare (NMS 10)
- risk assessment and school record-keeping contribute to boarders' welfare (NMS 23)
- boarders are supervised adequately by staff (NMS 31)
- staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site (NMS 32)
- boarders are adequately supervised at night (NMS 33)
- boarders are looked after by staff which have specific boarding duties, and have received adequate induction and continued training (NMS 34)
- boarders are looked after by staff which follow clear boarding policies and practice (NMS 35)
- the welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 51)
- the welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

Ofsted considers 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.