

# Copthorne Preparatory School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	17 January 2005

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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

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**

Copthorne School is a co-educational preparatory school for children from the age of seven to 13 years old. The boarding facility caters for up to 28 children, from the age of nine to 13 years. Accommodated in dormitories situated within the main body of the school building, the children are grouped by gender with three dormitories for the boys and one for the girls. The school was originally a private dwelling and was founded as a boys' school in 1902, with girls being admitted in 1980 for the first time. The school became a charitable trust in 1976. The school is predominantly a day school offering weekly and flexi-boarding opportunities to its pupils. There is no weekend boarding. The school has numerous playing fields and other sports facilities.

### **Summary**

This is the key announced inspection as part of the three-year inspection cycle for Boarding Schools. The inspection focused on the key National Minimum Standards and assessed the school's compliance with recommendations made at the last inspection. National Minimum Standards for the boarding facilities are also assessed under the outcome for economic wellbeing. The senior management team have a wealth of knowledge and experience to support the staff and children. The school is effective at ensuring that the children who board receive the appropriate support from staff to help them achieve progress, both academic and pastoral. The staff team are good with updating all of the relevant information needed to make the children's time at the school a success. The staff team work effectively at gaining the trust of the children and advocate for them in a positive manner. There are minor areas that require improvement. In discussion with the headmaster and staff it was evident that although the school has a personal, social and health education programme it is not fully developed. Children at the school generally feel there is someone they can talk to and the headmaster has a clear 'open door' policy. In addition, the school has a qualified counsellor who supports children in a number of different and creative ways. However, there are no formal arrangements for children who board to express their views. It was also noted that the boys showers, while in working order, were old. This forms part of the upgrading of boarding facilities planned for 2008. These issues were raised by the inspector during the course of this inspection and recommendations made to improve the service. Overall, the school is warm and very welcoming. The children are very supportive of the school and its ethos.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

All recommendations made at the last Commission Social Care Inspection have been complied with. A new recruitment policy and procedure is in place. All health and safety policies are held electronically and risk assessments are monitored by the bursar. In addition, Child Protection, Staff Training and Anti Bullying Policies are all given high priority at this school. There was a clear understanding of the principles of social care and good policies and procedures in place.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children enjoy nutritious, varied and healthy meals and have reasonable opportunities for being involved in menu planning. Food is supplied in adequate quantities, there is always a choice

and drinks and healthy snacks are made available at reasonable times. Theme days, which celebrate foods from different cultures, are occasionally held and specific dietary needs and wishes are catered for. Children's health is promoted by having appropriate policies and procedures in place. The school has a personal, social and moral education programme that aims to provide the children with confidence and knowledge about life, citizenship and healthily living, however, this is not fully developed. The school matron is currently involved in delivering part of this programme as appropriate. The school are planning to expand and further develop this programme from April 2008. In addition, the school have recently appointed a new deputy headmaster who is to commence his duties in April 2008 and be responsible for pastoral care throughout the school. A full medical history is given to the school when a child is first admitted and detailed records are maintained of any medical and health issues relating to individual children. The school receives updated information from parents about the children's health needs. The school is planning to review its policies and procedures relating to medication and this is to include a full medication audit in consultation with the school's matron. Overall, there are good systems for recording medication administered to individual children and for ensuring that personal records are held confidentially. The arrangements for first aid are good and include regular first aid training for staff members. The school does not have a school nurse. Any minor ailments are managed by the matron with the assistance of senior staff. These staff members know the needs of the children well and provide sensitive support. The children are happy to approach these staff members if they are injured or ill. Parents are contacted immediately if matron has any concerns or worries about a particular child and arrangements are made for the child to return home. If a child is taken ill when flexi-boarding, contact is made with parents the following morning. The school does not have a GP as the school only provides flexi boarding except for three children who board Monday to Friday. Therefore, most of the children stay registered with their own GP. Issues relating to privacy and gender are fully respected and handled sensitively. Medication is held in the matron's office and boarders are not permitted to administer their own medication. Medication stocks are held securely in a locked cabinet. The Matron has undertaken medication training and gives advice and guidance to the assistant matron. Good laundry provision is made for children's clothing and bedding.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children are well protected from bullying. The implementation of sound and robust policies and procedures, for example the policy on bullying, ensures the very few issues are quickly spotted and appropriately dealt with. The children and staff are, for the most part, unanimous that there is very little bullying in the boarding house. The very small numbers of children mean that any issues that arise are quickly and efficiently dealt with. The culture within the school is that of a large extended family, this is enshrined in the school's core values that underpin the ethos of the school. Children are well protected against any form of abuse as the school has very clear safeguarding policies and procedures that are in line with the National Minimum Standards. The lead child protection officer for the school has a copy of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006' and procedures of the Local Safeguarding Board. All staff, including gap students, at the school undertake child protection training as part of their induction which is regularly updated. In the absence of a current deputy head teacher, the Headmaster is responsible for discipline throughout the school. However, staff are encouraged to manage situations themselves before referral to more senior staff. The expectations for the children are evident and they comment that they all try to support one another and that there are few disciplinary issues throughout the school. Overall, the staff within the school are consistent

and fair in managing the children's behaviour. By monitoring records the head is able to spot trends or patterns and any causes for concern. The use of disciplinary measures is made clear within handbooks for staff, pupils and their parents. The school works hard to ensure that parents work in partnership with them. The school has a head boy and head girl who act as 'role models' and 'ambassadors'. The school has a house system and children are proud of their respective houses. There are only three children who board Monday to Friday, all the rest board as and when they and their parents wish. Children are extremely positive about flexi boarding and the overall contribution it makes to the school. Children are very keen to stress the 'fun' side of boarding and, for the most part, say they have a clear choice as to whether they board overnight. Those children who board at the school confirm that, if they had any issues or concerns while they are away from home, these are usually be dealt with informally by the Matron or other staff on duty. There are very few sanctions or behavioural issues within the boarding house. The headmaster has an 'open door' policy. If his door is open children are able to see him. A clear formal complaints procedure is available to boarders and their parents if they are unable to resolve matters informally. The policy is clear about the initial receipt of a complaint from a parent or third party, in terms of who will investigate and then, subsequently, if it fails to be resolved. Parents and pupils are also made aware of how to contact external agencies if they remain dissatisfied. Sufficient policies and procedures are in place to protect boarders' privacy. These are being implemented in practice. The standard of bathing and shower facilities within the school is reasonable although some of the boys complained about the showers they use. The school plans to renew the showers as part of the upgrading of boarding facilities that is planned for 2008. There is rigorous selection and vetting of staff who work with the children. The school usually employ two gap students from overseas that are subject to the same rigorous checks as staff. The school has an integrated fire detection system, although this is not linked to the local fire station. As soon as possible at the start of each term, a fire drill is carried out. The boarders demonstrate a good awareness of the fire drill, and confirm that the fire alarms are tested regularly. Boarders are shown what to do in the event of the fire alarm being activated and are aware of the escape route from the boarding house. The children are educated to use the appropriate exits in the school and proper fire alarm test, drill and alarm activation records are kept. Risk assessments are drawn up before every excursion or activity. For regular school activities, parental permission is sought once to cover all such regular occurrences. One member of staff takes the lead on co-ordinating all of the risk assessments, planning and preparing guidance for fellow colleagues.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

There is a good range of activities in the evenings for the children who board at the school. The children are encouraged to participate and in join in evening activities although this is not compulsory. Activities clearly help children to learn how to socialise and develop in a positive manner and enjoy new opportunities. Evening activities range from swimming, sports activities, an outing such as bowling or use of the schools facilities. Children have access to the extensive grounds, for which guidelines are in place, and good school facilities including a sports hall and indoor swimming pool. There is also indoor play equipment including snooker and computer games. Children speak positively and enthusiastically about the ethos of the school, activities, grounds and facilities which is also reflected in questionnaires. Children have access to the internet and there are suitable safeguards. There is an internet and email policy. Children name a wide range of people within the school they can talk to if they have a problem or if they need personal advice and are well supported. As stated earlier the head has an open door policy and

this was evidenced during the course of the inspection. The school has an external counsellor and children know of this person and how she can be contacted. This is an excellent provision and in the short time the counsellor has been working at the school she has clearly had an impact on school life. A confidentiality policy and contract has been drawn up between the counsellor and the school. The school has a sound equal opportunities policy. Children who do not have English as a first language receive language support and were observed to be integrated with other children. Special dietary needs are catered for and customs respected. There are no onerous demands on children. There is supervised prep for children in school and if they wish to study further, although this is generally unnecessary, they can use rooms in the school. The children are able to access quiet areas and can go to their dormitories at suitable times during the evening.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children have reasonable opportunities to contribute their views about the running of the boarding provision. There is a suggestion box and children generally feel happy to approach staff informally with their views. Staff members value the contributions and views of the children. However, at present there is not a school council where children could make representation about the boarding house or the food they eat at the school. In discussion with children, it became evident that although they felt their views were listened to this is something they would like. As part of the development plan for the school, the headmaster plans to consult boarders for ideas and suggestions. Children only board occasionally at the school and therefore parental contact is maintained on a very regular basis. Children have safe access to computers with internet access within the school, and there are quiet areas where children can use the telephone. Children are happy with these arrangements. Matron ensures that parents are kept well informed about significant issues relating to their children on a day-to-day basis. Children at the school are encouraged to try out flexi boarding and see what it is like. Children consider flexi boarding to be 'fun' and that it is great to stay overnight with their friends. The children have access to appropriate information and facilities outside of the school. Children are not permitted to leave the school grounds without a staff member. Children enjoy positive relationships with staff members and know that they can speak to an adult when they need to. Children are treated fairly and encouraged to speak up about any worries they have.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The boarding areas are kept neat and orderly, and pupils speak positively about the facilities. The dormitories are well decorated and furniture is of a good standard. The school has a rolling programme of refurbishment and decoration. Toilet and washing facilities are adequate. There are washbasins, soap and cloth towels in toilet areas. Some of the boys express concern that the showers do not work properly. However, these are due to be replaced as part of the upgrade of boarding facilities during 2008. Children who board Monday to Friday have a lockable facility to store items of a personal nature in. Those children that flexi board can leave such items in Matron's office. Personal and stationery items can be obtained at the school and staff organise any other shopping if necessary.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

A detailed prospectus is available along with a pupils guide, and a good range of information that is accessible via the school's website. School records are held manually and the headmaster regularly monitors the entries. The headmaster has a sound awareness of concerns, sanctions and praise that are appropriately recorded. The school has excellent risk assessments, ensuring that any identified risks are minimised. Off site and high risk activities are assessed before activities are agreed. These are monitored by the school bursar. The senior management team is very small at present, due to the lack of a deputy head teacher and senior teacher. However, the school have recently appointed a new deputy headmaster and an acting senior teacher. The school has not had to face any major crises for a considerable time. There are well formulated policies and procedures in place regarding pupil welfare, accidents and fire, to name but a few. Children have a good understanding of what to do in the event of fire and whom to contact in case of any other kind of emergency. Identified members of staff are allocated to oversee activities, and staff are always present at mealtimes. Children have very good relationships with most of the staff including matron, gap students and residential duty staff. Pupils speak highly of the support from staff, and describe the gap students as being like 'big brothers and sisters'. Suitable arrangements are also in place to ensure that cover is available when staff are sick or absent. Job descriptions are available in the staff handbook. An induction programme is available as well as a bi-annual programme of appraisal. These are detailed within the staff handbook. Gap students receive induction training when they arrive at the school. Staff have access to various training courses, both internal and external, including courses on boarding practice, run by the Boarding School Association if appropriate.

## **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.

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Due date</b>
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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):

- ensure that a suitable programme of personal, social and health education is delivered to all children at the school (NMS 6)
- ensure that there are formal opportunities for children to express their views on all aspects of boarding provision such as school council or other such meetings (NMS 12)
- undertake an audit of all boys shower and washing facilities and action any that require repair, renewal or decoration. (NMS 44)



## 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.**