

Hurst Lodge School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Date of last inspection	28 June 2004

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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

Hurst Lodge School is a non-selective boarding and day school for girls aged three to 18, located in Sunningdale, near Ascot, Berkshire. Historically Hurst Lodge was founded as a dance school and this remains a strong feature of the school today along with other creative and performance arts. Hurst Lodge offers flexi-boarding in addition to weekly boarding, there are approximately 12 weekly boarders from eight to 18 years. The boarding accommodation is central to the school located on the first floor. Boarders sleep in dormitories with girls of a similar age group, communal areas allow the girls to relax and socialise. Boarders can access the school's facilities particularly the studios for performance arts.

Summary

Hurst Lodge School provides a good level of pastoral care to its boarding pupils. Between staff and boarders there are some outstanding relationships, helping boarders to feel happy and secure. Staff have a warm and caring approach providing boarders with structure in a relaxed environment. Older pupils play a key role in supporting younger girls through mentoring. Parents agree that the care provided is good and they welcome the regular communication from the school. Clear direction and leadership is provided with sound policies and procedures in place. Boarder safety and quality of care are monitored regularly. The school does not have parental consent for the administration of first aid. Recruitment practices are not consistently applied.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Policies and procedures have improved since the last inspection to reflect current legislation, best practice and to meet the National Minimum Standards. A single record book is used to record administration of medication during the school day and in the evenings. A comprehensive child protection policy is in place and known by all staff; key staff attend external training on child protection matters. Systems are in place to record complaints, sanctions and pocket money. The principal monitors records regularly and has good oversight of the running of the school. Parental consent has not been obtained for the administration of first aid. Recruitment procedures are not consistently applied.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) is delivered within the school's educational curriculum and covers the topics of smoking, alcohol, illegal substances, sexual health and citizenship. Some visiting speakers contribute to the delivery of these subjects. The school has appropriate policies in place with regards to these matters and subjects are discussed across the curriculum for example drug culture is considered and debated in science, media studies, geography and English. The health and medical needs of the boarders are met by the boarding staff. With only three designated members of staff this supports a good system of safe administration of medication. Clear procedures are in place and medication is only administered if provided by parents with written consent. Medication in the boarding area is securely stored with records made in a log book. The same record book is used during the school day when

any medication is administered by office staff. One record book ensures that no medication is given in excess of the required dosage. Medication in the school office is not securely stored. The school has not obtained parental written consent for the administration of first aid. The majority of school staff are trained in first aid, some teaching staff and all boarding staff are trained on how to give medication following an allergic reaction. There is a good working relationship between the school and local surgery that provides advice and medical care to the boarders as required. Where possible, arrangements are made for any sick boarder to return home. The staff room has general details available on notice boards of particular medical conditions and special needs. Boarders are provided with a good level of catering and have opportunities to put forward suggestions to the catering manager. The menu offers a choice at each meal time in addition to a wide selection in the salad bar. With a healthy food policy in place the school has achieved awards for being a 'Healthy School' and for first class nutrition. During the evening, boarders may have some personal tuck or eat a snack of toast and/or fruit from the small kitchen area. For boarders who have dance classes at the time of supper a meal is saved for them and can be re-heated in a microwave in the boarding area. Boarders report that they like the food and feel they have a good choice.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school has an anti-bullying policy that is promoted through assemblies, lessons and through the PSHE programme. Boarders report that they do not experience bullying; some unkindness and falling out with friends may occur but is sorted out with support from the staff or older girls. Sixth form girls provide a key role for younger girls to turn to with any worries and the sixth formers are supported and guided by staff on how to respond and manage such situations. Through the school's passion of performing arts, workshops have been provided by sixth formers for younger girls to address the issue of friendships and bullying. There are sound systems in place for the protection of boarders with a clear child protection policy and procedures available to all staff. The school has liaised with the local authority for advice and training in child protection matters. The principal along with boarding staff are receiving external multi-agency training through the local authority. The principal ensures that all staff receive a briefing on child protection matters. The policy has some outdated references and requires some minor amendment. There is a policy for responding to any pupil reported as missing. School rules and expectations of behaviour are published in school documents and known by boarders who consider them to be fair. There is a strong community spirit with emphasis on showing courtesy and respect to others. The small number of boarders within the age range from eight to 18 years promotes a family environment where girls can be together irrespective of age unlike the classroom structure during the school day. Staff are provided with written guidance on how to respond to any misbehaviour ranging from a 'minus' to loss of free time, an extra duty of tidying up or a detention. Appropriate records are made of any sanctions issued. Praise, credits, stars and certificates are awarded for good results and behaviour. The strength of relationships amongst pupils and staff promotes informal resolution to any areas of dissatisfaction. A formal complaints procedure is available to boarders and their parents, it does not include contact details for Ofsted. There are good fire procedures in place and boarders and staff have experienced practising evacuation of the boarding accommodation. There is a comprehensive fire risk assessment and the school employs a consultant to undertake regular servicing of fire safety equipment. Staff receive regular fire safety training and during a practise an exit route may be blocked by the maintenance team to prompt boarders and staff to think of an alternative escape route. This ensures that the school community does not become complacent during

evacuation practices. Staff supervision of boarders does not intrude unnecessarily on boarders' privacy. Recruitment records confirm that all staff have clearance through the Criminal Records Bureau. The recruitment procedure is generally sound with two written references received followed by telephone verification; two omissions were noted. The system to monitor the recruitment process is being enhanced and implemented this term. The school has a form that is sent to previous employers asking specific questions as to the suitability of the applicant to work with children, this is in line with safer recruitment practice. The school takes appropriate measures to minimise the likelihood of contact with unchecked adults. All visitors are required to be greeted through a locked front door and are required to sign in and wear a visitor's badge. Any contractor is accompanied throughout the school by the maintenance staff. Access to the boarding area is restricted during the school day and school buildings have coded locks fitted. The school operates a 'lock down' procedure in the event of any threat from a local high security hospital or research laboratory. The boarders know of this plan and are provided with a brief explanation in the welcome book. Boarders feel safe at school and understand that procedures are in place to increase their security. The site is well maintained without any significant hazards posing a risk to the safety of boarders.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There are various activities throughout the school with regular trips out particularly linked to the performance arts. Extra Curricular activities include; horse riding, music theory, netball and hockey, tennis, Judo, musical theatre, library, computer room, dance classes, cookery club, art, Spanish, Information Technology, sports leader award and skiing. Many drama and dance classes occur in the evenings as boarders prepare for examinations. The school grounds provide some sports facilities and use of an outdoor pool in the summer months. There is a common room for boarders with soft furnishings, television and DVD player. During the evening this serves as the hub of boarding where girls can relax and socialise with girls from different year groups, knowing an adult is available to them. A parent who responded to a survey towards the inspection stated that; 'The older girls help with the younger ones and act as responsible mentors. Both (housemistress) and (assistant housemistress) are exemplary in their roles and the girls like and respect them.' This was supported through observation and discussion with boarders. There are some excellent relationships amongst boarders and staff and indeed amongst the boarders themselves as they are tolerant of each other and helpful in promoting a caring school community. A buddy system supports any new boarders, sixth formers are regarded highly by the younger girls and the head girl and her deputy play a role in bridging the gap between girls and staff. The staff team show a commitment to the school and pupils with their enthusiasm in supporting every pupil to reach their potential. Pastoral support is provided by the whole staff team and in particular through the principal and her deputy, the tutor system, boarding staff, special educational needs staff and the head of catering who encourages healthy eating for good wellbeing. A school counsellor is available by referral with parental consent. Communication amongst the staff is very good and largely face to face, this provides a consistent response to the pupils and their parents. Pupils are welcomed from all backgrounds and religious faiths, religious teaching is non-denominational. There are clear policies and procedures in place to promote equality and diversity. Religious and dietary needs are accommodated on an individual basis. Cultural difference and diversity are celebrated and explored through the curriculum and often expressed through the performance arts.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The strength of the relationships amongst boarders and staff encourages informal discussion where boarders contribute their views on boarding matters and are encouraged to make suggestions. Changes to the provision of some snacks and supper items are as a result of suggestions from the boarders in addition to a later return to school on Sunday evenings. Formally there are meetings held termly with boarders and there is a student council. A catering committee has disbanded due to no current matters arising but could be re-instated at any time, informally the catering manager talks with the boarders regularly during suppertime. Boarders can contact family and friends through telephone and personal mobile phones. Email facilities are generally available at reasonable times though the school were experiencing technical difficulties at the time of this inspection. Staff contact parents through email and telephone and parents have access to staff email addresses from the welcome book. Parents report that communication is excellent and support the following statement received, 'Regular parents' evenings are in place but all staff are available and accessible whenever required.' The school contributes to the local community taking part in festivals and events supporting charity work. Contact has been made with projects overseas providing support to underprivileged communities.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The accommodation is generally in a good decorative order providing a homely feel with comfortable furniture. The boarders state that they like their accommodation and are able to personalise their space with posters and photographs. The largest dormitory has been divided into smaller bed spaces by arranging the furniture to improve privacy. A significant draught can be felt from an ill fitting window in one of the dormitories. Some of the soft furnishings in the common area are in need of replacement and there is nowhere for girls to sit up to a table and eat a meal if they are having a late supper after their dance classes. Toilets and showers are suitable providing privacy and sufficient hot water.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a suitable prospectus and statement on boarding practice and principles. Additional information is available from welcome handbooks, an informative A-Z guide and the school's website. The principal provides effective leadership supported by a senior management team. Morale is high amongst the staff team where, as a community, they work together towards a shared aim of supporting the pupils in achieving and reaching their potential. The school has contingency plans prepared for any crises that may affect the welfare of boarders. Risk assessments are thorough and of a particularly high standard for off site trips in the UK and overseas. Regular meetings occur between boarding staff and the principal and her deputy. The principal maintains a strong presence in the school and is very accessible to pupils, parents and staff. The small size of the school allows for regular face to face communication and this promotes consistency of response to the pupils and their parents. The principal has a good oversight of pupil behaviour, risk assessments, accidents and any complaints through sound systems in place and the excellent channels of communication within the school. Boarding staff have written duties and handbooks of school policies and procedures to support them in caring

for the boarders. Training is encouraged on pastoral matters and three designated boarding staff are supported in attending multi-agency training in child protection with the local authority. Adequate staff supervision is provided for boarders during the evenings, the girls report that they know which adults are on duty and where to find them. There is no boarding at weekends, weekly boarders stay from Sunday evening going home Friday evening after the school day; many girls choose to board on a flexi arrangement.

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):

- obtain written parental consent for the administration of first aid. (NMS 15)
- ensure all medication is securely stored. (NMS 15)
- include in the complaints procedure reference to the role of Ofsted and contact details. (NMS 5)
- ensure that two references are obtained and verified for all staff. (NMS 38)
- ensure that significant draughts are eliminated in bedroom areas. (NMS 40)
- provide suitable furniture to allow meals to be eaten in the boarding area. (NMS 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.