

Barnardiston Hall Preparatory School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Julian Mason
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Address	Barnardiston Hall Preparatory School Barnardiston HAVERHILL Suffolk CB9 7TG
Telephone number	01440 786 316
Email	head@barnardiston-hall.co.uk or lesley@.....
Registered person	Keith Anthony Boulter
Head of care	
Head / Principal	
Date of last inspection	1 December 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

Barnardiston Hall Preparatory School was first established more than 45 years ago. It has traditionally fed a variety of secondary schools. The school is located on the borders of Suffolk, Cambridge and Essex, the closest Suffolk town being Haverhill. The school accommodates a total of 198 pupils of whom 49 are boarders. It is a co-educational mixed ability school, accepting children of high, average and below average abilities. Facilities include a special learning centre for children with specific educational needs, where pupil to teacher ratios are designed to be no higher than six to one. There are separate day nursery facilities for children aged one to five years on the school site. Children move into class one of the Pre-Prep School at the age of three years. The majority of children at the school are within the preparatory part of the school, and can stay at Barnardiston Hall until they are 13 years of age. Boarding arrangements are flexible, with a mix of weekly and full-time boarders. The proprietor, who is also the headmaster of the school, together with his wife and family members are responsible for the management and oversight of the school. There is no Board of Governors or management committee for the school. The family live in the main hall and the proprietor plays a key role as overall head of the school with the school's deputy acting as head of boarding among other management responsibilities. The boarding house has a team of pastoral staff which includes a combination of teaching staff some of whom live on site and others who are non-resident. There is also a small team of staff responsible for housekeeping and oversight of domestic arrangements, a school nurse, domestic and ancillary staff.

Summary

This was a key inspection that included a two and a half day visit to the school. This inspection looked at outcomes for the key National Minimum Standards for children and young people who are educated in Boarding Schools. Barnardiston Hall Preparatory School is outstanding. The inspection found that the school provides an excellent standard of boarding provision to assist children in their educational, personal, social and emotional development. Staff relationships with boarders are caring and very supportive. Many boarders describe their boarding experiences as being like part of an extended family. Boarders are very positive about their relationships with each other and the wider day school pupils. Boarders speak with great enthusiasm about the school and their boarding experiences.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has completed most of the recommendations made at the last inspection in December 2004. Some of the improvements reported by the school include: better written guidance for staff about induction and training, improved information to parents about how the school tackles bullying, written guidance about how boarders are supervised when they are ill, completion of Criminal Record Bureau checks for all staff and all hazardous cleaning substances are now locked away when not in use.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are able to receive first aid and health care that is consistent with their needs and circumstances. Staff are able to respond appropriately to medical emergencies, illness and injuries because they have received training in first aid. The nurse effectively manages and oversees all areas relating to medical treatment, medication and first aid. Boarders are supported to access additional health services to ensure their continuing medical needs are met. Teaching and support staff deliver an excellent range of information that helps boarders learn and understand about good health and well-being. The school has an effective personal, social and moral education programme that informs and educates boarders about a range of welfare issues. Boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal problems; they are able to confidently identify staff who they can go to for help and advice. In addition, boarders have access to a confidential counselling service if needed to ensure their emotional well-being is supported. The school is well informed about boarders health needs because records are comprehensive and regularly updated. Boarders benefit from a good quality catering provision which supplies nutritious, well-balanced and varied meals. Boarders are able to express their choices and preferences and they are actively educated about healthy eating. A wide range of choices are offered and any special diets are well catered for. The school uses food and mealtime arrangements to promote a range of cultural celebrations and events. Recently, staff and boarders successfully celebrated the Chinese New Year which included a meal that was consistent with the event.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders live in a secure environment where their safety and well-being is monitored and promoted by staff who carefully supervise them both on and off the premises. Boarders welfare is protected and promoted through the school's positive approach to bullying. Staff are very clear that bullying is not tolerated and this is reflected in boarders' confidence in the school. Bullying incidents are at a very low level and staff and boarders confirmed that incidents are dealt with effectively and sensitively. Boarders welfare is protected through clear child protection policies and procedures which are consistent with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. Staff have a clear understanding about their responsibilities in respect of keeping boarders safe. The school has designated child protection officers and most of the staff have attended child protection training. Boarders are encouraged to develop appropriate behaviour through the minimal use of punishments and an ethos where achievement and good behaviour is celebrated. Staff are focused on recognising and rewarding good behaviour through house points which go towards an end of year competition between boarding houses. The school has clear and appropriate policies and guidelines relating to behaviour, discipline and the use of punishments. Most boarders confirmed that they considered the punishments and sanctions that are in use to be fair and that they are encouraged to behave well. Boarders expressed confidence in the school's ability to deal with their complaints and concerns. Many boarders identified that they are able to approach the headmaster or deputy head as well as other boarding and teaching staff. Boarders value the fact that the headmaster is always approachable and available and that they are listened to. Most complaints are dealt with informally and the school has a more formal process for boarders, pupils and parents to use if necessary. The school handbook did not include details of how to contact Ofsted if a parent wanted to complain. Boarders are protected from the risk of fire by rigorous fire safety precautions and well trained staff. Regular fire evacuation practises take place and all fire safety equipment is checked and serviced in line with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service which is evidence in detailed records. Boarders demonstrate a very good understanding of the school's evacuation

procedures which helps them keep safe. Boarders welfare is further protected by comprehensive health and safety procedures, detailed risk assessments which have been reviewed by an external company to ensure the assessments are effective. Boarders protection and safety is promoted through clear, thorough and robust systems of recruitment and selection. The School follows clear procedures on the recruitment of all staff which are in line with the Department for Children, Schools and Families guidelines. Detailed records are maintained of the selection process which ensures that all staff appointed have undergone rigorous checks and are suitable to work in the school.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders benefit from high levels of individual support provided by house, health centre and academic staff. Boarders are clear about which members of staff they can go to for personal support and the school has clear guidance for staff and boarders about how support is provided. Many boarders identified their positive relationships with staff as the most important and enjoyable feature of boarding life at the school. Boarders are able to choose from an excellent range of activities and events from regular clubs to one off excursions. Staff and teachers work hard to ensure the range of activities on offer are exciting and engaging. Many boarders expressed difficulty in choosing what to do because there was so much on offer. Boarders benefit from the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. The school supports the diversity of all its pupils and provides individualised support to those boarders whose first language is not English and pupils who may require additional academic or personal support. Many boarders highlighted and valued the help they receive from the Bridge staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Positive relationships between staff and boarders help children feel valued and able to contribute positively to the life of the school. Consultation arrangements are informal and operate outside of any established routines which could improve the way boarders are consulted. The school has systems in place to help new boarders settle in to the school and adjust to boarding life. New boarders benefit from both written information, setting out the school's procedures and practical guidance from experienced boarders. House staff provide warm, positive support and boarders benefit greatly from their experience, skills and knowledge. The school encourages boarders to keep in contact with family and friends. Boarders are able to make private telephone calls, use e-mail or write to relatives, friends and family.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Boarding accommodation is comfortable, clean, reasonably furnished and well maintained. A few boarders would like more personal space, but the school makes good use of the limited space it has available. Bedroom accommodation is dormitory style, using bunk beds, with storage space nearby. Boarders are able to personalise some space around their rooms with pictures and posters which makes the accommodation feel more homely and personal. The school has just completed a renovation programme for the shower and toilet rooms to improve standards of accommodation on offer to boarders.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Parents and boarders receive a good range of information about the school's ethos and values via a written prospectus and a range of other useful and interesting publications. Information is also available through the school's website. The publications provide a detailed and comprehensive picture of life at the school. Boarders welfare is promoted by appropriate monitoring systems. These ensure senior staff in the school have a clear overview of key records relating to risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents. These measures contribute to ensuring that boarders are cared for in a consistent and safe manner. Boarders benefit from a dedicated residential staff team who are clear about their roles within the individual houses and who they are accountable to. House staff meet on a regular basis through a variety of forums to ensure they are kept informed of any specific issues relating to the house or boarders. There are adequate levels of boarding staff who are available in houses during the key times boarders are resident.

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):

- ensure that the staff including ancillary staff who have missed the annual child protection training are provided with an opportunity to attend repeat training, as set out in National Minimum Standard 3
- update the school's written information to include details of how boarders and parents can contact Ofsted if they have a complaint about the school, as set out in National Minimum Standard 5
- improve the way boarders views and opinions are sought by developing a wider range of methods of consultation, as set out in National Minimum Standard 12

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.