

Ashby School (School House)

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Jane Barton
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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

School House was first established in 1567. Ashby School is a state boarding school and School House, situated within the grounds of Ashby School, provides boarding accommodation for boys attending Ashby School, Ivanhoe College and Manor House Independent School. School House currently accommodates 49 boarders aged 11-18 years. Most of the dormitories are in the main building. A small number of sixth form boarders are housed in single rooms in the annexe. This annexe has a small common room and kitchen where resident boarders are able to make snacks and drinks. The staff offices are within the main building, as is the flat of the resident Deputy Director of Boarding. School House has a dining room and kitchen where meals are freshly prepared each day. There is a sitting room and a computer room in School House. A swimming pool, gymnasium and sports hall are available nearby on Ashby School premises for use by boarders in their free time. The centre of Ashby-de-la-Zouch is a short walking distance from School House and has the usual shops and amenities associated with a small town. The boarders are able to access the facilities of the local leisure centre in addition to facilities provided within the school.

Summary

This inspection took place over two days with a lead inspector and a boarding school additional inspector. This was a statutory inspection required every three years to focus on the key standards and the progress made on recommendations from the previous inspection. In addition to the key standards, standards 5, 7, 8, 11, 16, 17, 20, 24, 25, 40, 46 and 49 were also inspected. 47 out of 49 boarders and 4 parents returned questionnaires prior to the inspection. This boarding house offers a high level of care and support for the boarders living here. This is achieved through robust direction from the senior management team; clear, succinct and relevant policies and guidance and a staffing structure which has clear line management responsibilities and leadership. Staff are committed to enabling the boarders to benefit from a safe and nurturing environment and meet their potential socially and educationally. The atmosphere in the house is extremely positive and reflects the care and support provided. Boys from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures are encouraged to integrate within the house and this is achieved positively. The boys present as really caring about each other and their house, which reflects how well they are cared for themselves.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Improvements have been made to the child protection policy, which has been updated and includes explicit lines of responsibility. 'Whistleblowing', 'Missing Child' and 'Restraint' policies have been developed also. The admissions policy has been clarified in relation to the selection of boarders for School House and is contained in the prospectus. The Governors Boarding Committee have been provided with relevant documentation to facilitate their monitoring of boarding, and selected governors have attended child protection training. Appropriate records are monitored regularly by the director of boarding and the head teacher who visits the house regularly. A robust system for recording and monitoring of boarders' health issues has been put in place. An additional toilet was installed at School House immediately following the previous visit.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Staff in School House actively promote the emotional, social and physical health needs of boarders living there. Boarders are provided with healthy, nutritious and varied meals including vegetarian options and other individual dietary requirements. Catering staff have a robust understanding of healthy eating and fruit, salads and fresh vegetables are provided at every meal to ensure a balanced diet is available. Boarders are encouraged to try healthy options and were observed eating second helpings enthusiastically. Boarders are consulted about the menus and feel they can make suggestions to catering staff which will be listened to. Snacks and fresh water are available and boarders have a lockable cupboards for their own foods. Effective arrangements are in place for boarders to receive routine health care through locally identified health services. Appropriate consents for all treatments are on file. An extremely thorough process is in place for recording health information in respect of boarders, and for monitoring their health needs. This includes regular liaison with parents as appropriate. Arrangements are in place to look after boarders when they are ill, with specific accommodation provided for this purpose. A system to alert staff during the night is in place. The boarders spoken with feel they are well looked after and supported with any health needs. Staff are qualified to provide first aid and update this training as required. Robust procedures are in place to manage risks to health such as smoking, alcohol and substance misuse. Information regarding health, personal or social issues is clearly displayed and available to boarders. Records show incidences are rare but well managed. Records are kept which clearly identify the individual needs of boarders and how these are to be met. Staff are very experienced in offering individual support, meet regularly to monitor progress and have a thorough awareness of the particular needs of boarders. Boarders expressed the view that they were very well supported and could readily ask for help or advice if needed. Boarders benefit from an efficient laundry system.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school policy on countering bullying is clear and implemented effectively in practice. Staff are extremely vigilant and alert to relationships and situations which have the potential to develop into bullying. Clear records indicate that intervention is swift and successful. Boarders expressed the view that bullying was not tolerated in the boarding house and would be dealt with immediately by staff. The designated child protection officer at the school has extensive experience of multi-agency safeguarding issues both operationally and strategically. Robust policies have been developed to respond to safeguarding issues and protect boarders from abuse. All staff have been trained to respond appropriately to allegations or disclosures and have an extensive understanding of their own responsibility for protecting and promoting the welfare of boarders. Boarders clearly state they feel safe in the boarding house and their privacy is respected at all times. Robust policies are in place to respond to inappropriate behaviour, records show any punishment is fair and proportionate, parents are routinely kept informed and provided with information. Boarders sign an agreement in respect of behaviour on arriving at the house and clearly understand the rules and their responsibilities, they expressed the view that they feel fairly treated and punishments are not frequently used. Boarders are aware of the complaints process and feel they can express any concerns. Records show complaints are hardly ever made and this supports boarders' views that issues are sorted quickly before they develop into formal complaints. Safe arrangements are in place to ensure boarders know how to respond to fire emergencies. Fire drills take place regularly and the advice of the fire service

fully complied with. Risk assessments in place are regularly updated and equipment and safety checks routinely undertaken. A new Safer Recruitment policy has been drawn up, based on guidance issued in early 2007. This guidance is not as robust as the requirements for recruitment in the National Minimum Standards. Six recruitment files for staff employed since the last visit were examined. Some staff have been recruited prior to Criminal Records Bureau checks and references being in place, however, these staff have not been allowed any unsupervised access to boarders. One file did not contain a full employment history and evidence of verbal checks on references were not all present or dated. Senior staff responsible for this recruitment process agreed to make immediate changes to the policy to include the requirements of the National Minimum Standards and to commence recruiting with regard to these with immediate effect. Advice given at the time of the previous visit has exacerbated the confusion resulting from two sets of guidance. An effective checking and supervising system is in place for staff who are not employed by the school. A system is in place to ensure enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks are renewed every three years. The management team based their new policy on guidance not relating specifically to boarding welfare in good faith and they demonstrate full commitment to promoting safe care for boarders. Safe arrangements are in place to manage visitors to School House. A range of effective procedures are in place to limit the possibility of any unauthorised access to the boarding house, which include closed circuit television monitoring of all external entrances and night patrolling by security personnel. External doors are locked electronically, with boarders having electronic keys or codes which are changed regularly. Staff are vigilant during the evenings to ensure no unauthorised people are on site. All areas inside and outside of the boarding house are subject to risk assessments to protect boarders at all times. All activities are subject to risk assessment and parental consent. A robust health and safety policy provides guidance for all staff, and is adhered to in practice. Boarders reported feeling safe, secure and protected by measures in place. Windows in two dormitories did not have restrictors in place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Regular activities are offered for boarders, this includes activities in the house and weekly trips such as to the cinema or shopping. School facilities including a sports hall, gym, swimming pool and a range of courts, are available after school hours with the appropriate supervision. Boarders are happy with the free time they have and they can easily access the local town during agreed periods of free time. Boarders gave examples of requesting particular activities which were provided on request, such as water polo. Internet access is available and appropriate safeguards are in place. Boarders benefit from an excellent level of individual support provided by all boarding house staff. This is a particular strength in School House. Staff demonstrated a thorough awareness of the needs of the boys they were looking after. All boarders spoken with said they have a choice of people they can talk to and discussions show this can be a number of staff in different roles. Information on a variety of support services including an independent visitor are prominently displayed. The independent visitor role is carried out by the designated child protection officer who otherwise has no specific role in boarding. Boarders were aware of the role and how to contact her. Tutor systems are in place in school and provide opportunities for all boarders to discuss issues. Boarding staff are extremely child-focussed and demonstrated a high level of commitment to ensuring boarders' welfare. The boarding house accommodates boarders from different ethnic backgrounds, staff at all levels regularly discuss the challenges of caring for a diverse group and are fully committed to providing positive experiences for all. An equal opportunities policy is in place and there are systems to explore and monitor any

issues to ensure discrimination is not a factor. Records show any potential issues are quickly and robustly managed. Boarders report they feel fairly treated at all times. An excellent system of culturally sensitive support is in place to assist boarders with the English language, this is provided on an individual basis if required. Relationships between boarders of different cultures and backgrounds were observed to be positive and caring. Boarders have access during free time on weekdays and at weekends to a range of safe recreational areas both inside and outside School House.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders benefit from a variety of opportunities to contribute to the operation of the school and say they feel listened to. Boarders can receive letters, emails and phone calls in private. Parent respondents to questionnaires said they have regular contact from staff regarding their child's progress. A robust induction process is in place, with extensive pertinent information sent to boarders and their families prior to their arrival at the school. Boarders reported being helped to settle-in by staff and other boys. Boarders have regular access to information and local facilities through trips to town, organised trips, television, daily newspapers delivered to the school and access to the internet. Boarders and staff enjoy positive and respectful relationships. Boarders feel they are fairly and consistently treated by all staff. The older boys have developed mature social skills and an understanding of the rules and decision making processes at the school which they perceive as demonstrating the high level of care being provided for them.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Invoicing and pocket money are tightly controlled through the bursars office and the house secretary. This system runs efficiently, covers all trips and extras and gives parents a print-out of instant information should they require this. The accommodation for boarders is well lit, warm and homely and reasonably decorated in most areas. There is an impressive commitment to improve on the privacy and space for boarders and overcome the limitations imposed by the design of the building. Cabin beds have been provided in most dormitories. Some sixth form boarders are using a room with bunk beds, however, they did not see this as a problem and were happy with their room. Boarders can personalise their space to their own tastes and keep their possessions safe in lockable cupboards. Bathroom facilities are satisfactory and private. The sixth form annexe provides basic accommodation with single rooms for each boarder. The sixth formers were enthusiastic about the annexe, enjoying the level of independence it represents.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Excellent information is provided within the prospectus for parents and boarders on all aspects of boarding. This clearly sets out what is provided and what can be expected. The information in the documents is consistent with the experience of boarding found during this visit. Staff are supported in their role with robust policies and procedures which specifically set out the expectations, guidelines and relevant information and these are followed in practice. All staff receive an induction to boarding and regular relevant training. Leadership, as carried out by the director of boarding, is a significant strength at School House. Senior boarding staff are

experienced and skilled at safeguarding boarders and promoting their welfare. A system is in place for monitoring of welfare provision through the governing body. Specific responsibilities for boarding are designated within the governing body and regular meetings take place to discuss all matters and developments in relation to boarding. Appropriate planned responses are in place to a range of foreseeable major incidents or crises. The head teacher monitors incidents and events at the boarding house as required and demonstrates an extensive knowledge of issues pertinent to boarding as she visits the house often. Risks are minimised through appropriate actions taken arising from risk assessments. Clearly there is a high level of commitment to developing positive experiences and improvements for boarders as part of the overall future development and financial planning within the school. Boarders are effectively supervised by a consistent staff team. A duty rota is in place, boarders know who is looking after them at any time, and extra staff are provided during prep time to offer a high level of support to boarders in groups and individually as required. Boys do not feel there is ever a time when insufficient staff are available to them. When leaving the school site clear arrangements are in place to ensure boarders' safety. Staff are effectively inducted, and a professional development programme is in place to review performance and identify areas of training or development needed. A clear line management and supervisory structure is in place and staff have a clear understanding of their roles.

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 recruitment of all staff who work with boarders includes checks with the Criminal Records Bureau prior to employment and also all matters addressed under Standard 38.2 (Standard 38.2, 38.7)
- ensure that all windows accessible to boarders above the ground floor and presenting a risk to safety are fitted with suitable opening restrictors or alternative safety measures (Standard 47.3)
- ensure that bunk beds are only exceptionally used for boarders beyond Year 8 (Standard 42.5)

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.