

Abberley Hall School

Inspection report for boarding school

Unique reference number	SC043032
Inspection date	31 January 2008
Inspector	Dawn Taylor / Martha Nethaway
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	30 June 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

Abberley Hall (the School) is a Preparatory School for both boys and girls from the age of seven years to 13. The School is predominantly a boarding school, but offers day education as well. It is set within its own extensive grounds in a wooded, hilly area of northwest Worcestershire. The junior girls and all of the boys are accommodated in the main house. The older girl boarders are accommodated in the adapted Coach House.

Summary

This was an announced inspection undertaken by two Ofsted inspectors and a BSAI over three days. The inspection looked at the key Boarding School National Minimum Standards under the Every Child Matters outcome groups. At the time of the inspection there were 135 boarders and 53 day pupils.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Pupils health and wellbeing needs are being promoted through effective services. Boarders are given a range of information that helps them learn and understand about good health and wellbeing. These areas are also addressed formally through the School curriculum, in chapel and in day-to-day discussions with staff. Boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal problems and are able to confidently identify staff who they can go to for help and advice. Boarders can obtain good quality medical care. Two registered nurses are available for the treatment of minor illnesses and first aid. Information regarding the health and medical histories of each pupil is gained as part of the School's admission process through proactive contact with families. Policies and procedures are in place for the storage and administration of medication. The School intends to put a medication cabinet into Yates boarding house that meets the Royal Pharmaceutical Guidelines. Medication in Yates boarding house is currently stored in a locked drawer. An audit trail is not maintained of medication stored in Yates to ensure the provision of non-prescription medicines is in line with the School's protocol and the health and safety of pupils are promoted. Pupils health needs are clearly identified and met. They attend a variety of medical appointments with the support and encouragement of staff. A record is kept of the outcomes of all medical appointments to ensure any ongoing concerns are addressed. Boarders keeping and administering their own medication are assessed by nurses as sufficiently responsible to do so, however, there is no written record maintained to reflect this judgement.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Pupils welfare and safety is positively promoted because staff listen and take appropriate actions to protect them from harm and safeguard their welfare. Boarders state that the School respects their privacy. Staff are able to demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of this aspect of children's care. Boarder's welfare is further promoted because they are clear

about how to make a complaint and feel that their concerns are listened to. Many boarders identified that they are able to approach the Headmaster as well as other boarding and teaching staff. Boarders valued the fact that the Headmaster was always approachable and available. Boarders welfare is protected through the School's positive approach to bullying. Boarders and staff are very clear that bullying is not tolerated. Pupils reported that bullying is rare and confirmed that incidents are dealt with effectively and sensitively. The management of behaviour is based on active encouragement of acceptable behaviour. Positive behaviour is rewarded and inappropriate behaviour is addressed in a fair way that helps a child learn and look to the future. The School has a strong focus on promoting effective ways of communicating and rewarding behaviour that enhances the School's community. Aspects of this practice are described in a range of information provided to parents, staff and pupils. There is, however, no single policy or procedure that reflects the established and effective practice with regard to consequences and rewards at Abberley Hall School. 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 majority of staff have received in-house child protection training that ensures they know and understand the procedures and the importance of reporting concerns. Internal training has been scheduled for all ancillary staff. Pupils expressed confidence in the safety and security of the School. The School has a very clear policy, followed by all staff, that ensures that any adults who have access to boarders and boarding accommodation are kept under staff supervision. Pupils learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they regularly practise the emergency escape drill. Safe procedures are in place to protect pupils with tests on the fire systems and other electrical equipment taking place at the appropriate intervals. The School operates an established staff recruitment and staff vetting procedure. The School's records of the selection process undertaken are generally satisfactory, however, records of interviews, with a written record of the outcome are not being kept for all staff and gap students. Staff demonstrate an awareness of the need to safeguard pupils and appoint the right person for the job. The School has thorough risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds and has taken particular efforts to ensure that all areas used by boarders are free from avoidable safety hazards.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Individual and group support to pupils is given a high priority by the School. Pupils are benefiting from living in a School where staff are focussed on their success, needs and achievements. Boarders receive high levels of individual support from boarding and academic staff. There are appointed staff who assist pupils whose first language is not English and children with learning and other needs. These staff have regular meetings with pupils to discuss educational and pastoral matters. All boarders benefit from the School's commitment to equality of opportunity. All children are members of a form as well as a tutor group, which is seen as one of the foundations of the School's pastoral system. Tutor groups are informal often held over a lunch or hot chocolate. Pupils are encouraged to discuss all matters related to their boarding life. Staff response is positive and they take seriously the matters raised in these forums. Many boarders identified their positive relationships with staff as the most important and enjoyable feature of boarding life at the School.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Pupils are actively encouraged to contribute to the running of the School because their views and opinions are valued, which results in social cohesion and strong School identity. Pupils consider that they benefit from a supportive boarding experience, which is open and inclusive. The School's system gains pupils views about matters affecting their daily lives and the general running of the boarding houses. Regular tutor groups and weekly prefect meetings with the Headmaster provides time for pupils to raise concerns, discuss worries and express points of views. The staff respond to boarders in a positive and thoughtful way and boarders are in turn positive about their relationship with the staff. This helps pupils to feel ownership of the setting and to be part of School life. Pupil contact with parents and families is promoted by staff who demonstrate a positive approach to relationships. Pupils write weekly letters home and have access to a sufficient number of computers and telephones. There are procedures in place for the appropriate use of mobile phones and overseas students are able to use School phones at alternative times of the day in private to contact home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Pupils enriched care and educational experience is underpinned by the School's coherent philosophy and values, and sound leadership. 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. The Headmaster provides strong leadership to the pupils and staff team. He is actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the School. Pupils are making good progress because staffing in the School is well-organised and effectively managed. Their welfare is monitored with regular discussions within staff meetings. The Management Team provides effective monitoring of relevant records, such as the complaints, child protection and sanctions logs. This ensures proper scrutiny of all aspects of the pupils care. Any shortfalls in these areas are identified and addressed. This quality monitoring and other similar initiatives contribute to periodic reports to the Governors and the School's overall strategic plan.

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 risk assessments are completed for boarders keeping and administering their own medication NMS 15.11
- ensure that there is an audit trail of all non-prescribed medication sent between the surgery and Yates boarding house and from a child's home to the boarding house NMS 15.12

- ensure existing guidance is developed into one coherent policy on discipline, punishments and rewards for good behaviour NMS 4.2
- ensure there is a satisfactory recruitment process, recorded in writing, for all staff (including gap students) that includes the staff member's interview, with a written record of the outcome NMS 38.1 and 38.2.

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.