

Ardingly College - Senior Provision

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Mike Stapley
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	22 November 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

Ardingly College is a school of the Woodard Corporation and as such has a long history of providing educational opportunities for young people. The aim of the school, as outlined in the prospectus and handbooks, is to enable all students to develop 'their love of learning, academic potential and individual talents in a caring community which fosters sensitivity, confidence, a sense of service and enthusiasm for life'. The school accommodates approximately 260 students, both boys and girls, and additionally provides for over 500 day students. Students originate from the local area as well as from further a field including overseas. Those students who board are accommodated in six separate houses, the majority of which are newly built on the school site.

Summary

The inspection took place over the course of four on site inspection days, preceded by a pre planning meeting and student survey. The inspection team comprised of three inspectors from Ofsted. This inspection focused on specific standards aimed at assessing the welfare of the students who are boarding at the school. Information on which to assess the school's performance was gathered in a variety of ways. These included the examination of documentary information that was supplied by the school, discussions with students in small groups, student guided tours of the boarding houses and recreational areas, as well as discussions with the headmaster and a wide range of school staff. The senior management team at the college have a wealth of knowledge and experience to support the staff and students at the school. The school is effective at ensuring that the students who board receive the appropriate support from staff to help them achieve progress, both academic and personal. The staff team are good with updating all of the relevant information needed to make students' time at the school a success. The staff team work effectively at gaining the trust of the students and advocate for them in a positive manner. There are some key areas that require improvement. In discussion with the Headmaster and staff it was evident that the college had not complied with all the recommendations made at the last Commission Social Care Inspection three years ago. Recommendations made regarding recruitment and risk assessment had not taken place although at the time of the inspection a new recruitment process had been developed. These issues were raised by the inspectors during the course of this inspection and recommendations made to improve the service. Overall the school is warm and very welcoming and the students are very supportive of the school and its ethos.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The new Headmaster is in the process of undertaking a strategic review that will encompass all aspects of college life. A new recruitment policy and procedure has been introduced and applies to all new staff appointments. The college will need to ensure this process applies to all existing staff and ensure that such staff have all such checks as outlined in Standard 38. Child Protection, Staff Training and Anti Bullying Policies are all given high priority at the college. Improvement had taken place in consultation with the young people including the recently formed 'Sixth Form Voice'. There is a clear understanding of the principles of social care and for the most part good policies and procedures are in place.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Students have access to a 24 hour medical centre with a high quality of medical treatment, first aid and constant supervision in a comfortable and welcoming environment. There is an isolation room and separate accommodation for boys and girls. Three nurses work shifts and all are currently registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. The nurses undertake regular training including courses offered by the Boarding Schools Association to maintain their licence to practice. The medical centre is bright, with colourful displays on health boards promoting good diet and other special displays for example national 'no smoking day'. Parents are required to give health information when students are enrolled and this information is updated regularly. All students have consent for emergency treatment and the administration of medication. The nurses have a good working relationship with a local doctors' practice and surgeries are held at school three times a week. The doctor monitors the nursing records monthly and gives advice on protocols for medication or specific treatment for asthmatics, for example. Health information is shared with staff on a need to know basis and with the knowledge of students. All staff are alerted to students with specific allergies, notably 'nut allergy' and photographs of these students are displayed in the catering department as well as in the houses and college staff-rooms. The nurses, who treat the students' health matters confidentially, build good trusting relationships and are well regarded by parents, staff and students. The students have access to a counsellor who practices for five hours per week in the medical centre and all students are referred by the doctor or the nurses. The school employs Sodexo Catering to deliver all catering services in the college. The catering staff have a sound understanding of the students' wishes and needs and provide good quality and varied food. They invite the food committee to sample food in advance and some students report that several of their suggestions and requests have been implemented. Fruit and fresh vegetables are served twice a day and home-made soup and yoghurt are popular choices. They cater for many different diets with vegetarian options and multi-national dishes. The promotion of good eating habits guides the philosophy of the catering team. The dining room is of adequate size and the pupils eat in an orderly fashion. Cutlery and crockery are clean and the students are encouraged to have water with their meals. The school offers an age appropriate Learning for Life programme to students in Shell (Y9), Remove (Y10) and Sixth Form. This covers topics of relationships, substance abuse including alcohol, stress and depression, sexual health, healthy eating and it reflects the Woodard tradition of service and tranquillity.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

The college has in place anti-bullying policies and relationships are a topic in the Learning for Life programme taught in Shell (Y9), Remove (Y10) and the Lower Sixth in the senior school and also in the programme offered in the junior school. To raise awareness of bullying issues in the college both the junior school and the senior school issued questionnaires to the students during anti-bullying week. Bullying issues highlighted were mainly of a less serious nature, and the college published their findings and discussed the concerns with students of all ages and parents. The students have a clear idea of what constitutes bullying and intimidating behaviour and feel the staff address issues associated with bullying in a firm manner. There are records in both schools of incidents and actions taken to address these issues but good practice suggests that over-arching policies building on the effective monitoring methods of the junior school would make the record keeping of bullying and other misdemeanours robust. The college

encourages the highest standards of behaviour and addresses poor or inappropriate behaviour in a suitable manner. Students consider that the sanctions are fair and are generally only implemented to reinforce the rules. The prefects are briefed and have no power to punish. Use of sanctions is kept to a minimum and the college prefers to nurture effort, responsibility and positive actions with recognition of students' effort wherever it occurs and suitable age related rewards. The college provides all staff with suitable child protection training updated within the last year and boarding staff have an understanding of key child protection issues. Three members of staff share responsibility for child protection and there are records confirming liaison with the local team and other teams for advice where any concerns have arisen. The college's child protection policy is reviewed annually to ensure that it incorporates all policies and practices of the new West Sussex Safeguarding procedures. The college addresses fire safety and works closely with the local fire safety service. There are no outstanding recommendations from the fire service. Students clearly know how to evacuate from the houses and there are tracking systems in place to find quickly students, who are out on the campus when the alarm sounds. There are regular drills including in the hours of darkness and servicing of equipment is contracted out. Tests are routinely carried out and records are kept but during the inspection, an inspector found two fire extinguishers that had been discharged. There has been no fire training of staff and no designated fire wardens or prefects. Good practice suggests that a member of the senior management team monitor all fire risk assessments. Students did not raise any issues of privacy and the inspectors observed good practice in the houses. The school has a written contract agreeing the terms of residence with all adults living in the boarding houses but not employed at the college. The Headmaster implemented a new recruitment policy in September and, although all adults working on the site have the required Criminal Records Bureau clearance (CRB), there are significant omissions in the recruitment procedure. In the inspection of 2004 it was a recommendation to implement a robust recruitment system immediately, This has not been done. The college has extended the number of keypad locks on doors of boarding houses, the music centre and the main school building since the last inspection. The CCTV system records activity near the main building and the external lighting system has been improved. At the last inspection it was a recommendation to carry out a risk assessment of public access to the site with specific reference to the public footpaths and to review the security policy annually. The School Council is exploring the possibility of re-routing the bridleway through the college but the risk assessment of public access to the site has not yet been done. There are excellent risk assessments for high risk activities on and off site as well as visits overseas to high risk areas giving the students opportunities to engage in active and fulfilling experiences. The outcome for young people in this section is judged as inadequate as a number of key standards have not been met. In addition there are also weaknesses in some procedures and documentation which requires amendment in order to ensure young people are fully protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There is a good range of indoor and outdoor activities available to the boarding students and staff are committed to encouraging students to try out different opportunities. A number of full boarding students in discussion commented on a limited number of activities being available on alternative weekends when the weekly students were at home. The students' working days are busy, but students commented that they have the opportunity to watch television and relax in the later part of the evenings and during the weekends. Students commented that the seven period teaching day on Thursdays left them feeling quite tired. Students are able to access the

internet in all boarding houses through college provided computers and there are adequate safeguards in place to protect students from risk via the internet. Boarders have access to a number of staff to provide help and guidance and in practice this is usually the Housemaster or Housemistress. House staff and tutors in the houses provide good quality pastoral care although tutors are not necessarily house based. A counselling service is available to the students and referral arrangements are made through the medical centre staff, however the counsellor has not been subjected to the full staff recruitment check procedure. Boarders stated that the college prefects and Gap year students were a helpful source of support and both the prefects and the Gap year students receive training to be aware of issues such as bullying and to recognise signs of distress amongst the younger students. The college has an approach that values the diverse needs of its boarders and this is evidenced through the tutor scheme, through regular chapel services and the college (LfL) Learning for Life programme, so that issues on gender, physical difference, race, religion, cultural or linguistic background are addressed appropriately. The college makes good arrangements to cope with the needs of those students whose first language is not English and overseas boarders say they have been made to feel very welcome. The college is attentive in ensuring that any demands on boarders, for example sports practise, do not adversely affect their welfare, although a number of students felt that the lunchtime break period was rushed due to the large number of students using the dining hall. Boarding space is arranged so that those who board full time and older students are more likely to have their own room, or a room shared with one other person, who may be a day student. A number of students in the junior and senior school commented that it was not always easy to find space to be on their own and to be private. All students are encouraged to achieve educationally and socially to their full potential and the good teacher student relationships evident throughout the inspection was supported by the student questionnaires. The discussions with individual year groups across the boarding houses indicated that most boarding students made friends very quickly when they joined the college and a number indicated that they felt that the college was very much their second home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders can raise any issues with personal tutors who they meet with weekly to air their views. There are student council meetings held twice a term for boarders to express views on all aspects of the boarding provision. Boarders have an opportunity to sit on the student council, or to air their views through a student council representative. The council has been allocated a small budget, expenditure from which is agreed by the Headmaster. The deputy head and two staff sit on the council along with those students who are duly elected by their peers. In addition sixth formers have an opportunity to express their views through the 'Sixth Form Voice' This is a newly formed group and representatives are selected by their respective Housemaster/mistress. Housemasters/mistresses and matrons are available for boarders to talk to informally and any member of school staff may be approached. All boarders spoken with said that they were happy to speak with most staff members regarding any concerns that they have and that staff take their concerns seriously. Personal tutors are available to boarders to discuss any concerns regarding school and personal problems. Boarders spoken with reported that the tutor system functions well. Tutors spend at least one evening each week working in the houses ensuring that they are easily accessible to boarders. There is a school counsellor, who is based in the college medical centre although students spoken to were not all aware of this service. Each of the boarding houses has payphones for pupils to use. Additionally, the majority of the boarders have their own mobile phones. There are computers with internet

access in all of the houses, and in the school library. Many of the boarders use e-mail to keep in contact with their family members and friends. Internet security programs have been installed to provide safety and protection for boarders from inappropriate internet content. However students did comment that they were allowed access to Facebook at the weekends. Boarders are happy with the arrangements for sending and receiving post. Parents are kept informed about issues relating to their child on a regular basis by staff members. The housemaster in the junior school reported that he and the matron are in regular contact with the parents of boarders to discuss any issues of concern. Each of the houses provides a boarder's handbook that relates specifically to that house. This is in addition to the general pupil handbook. All new boarders have an opportunity to be introduced to school life by spending a taster day at the college. This provides an opportunity for boarders to meet with staff and other boarders as well as to get to know the rules and facilities. Some houses operate a buddy or mentoring system for new boarders with older boarders showing the younger ones around the school's facilities. Boarders spoken with said that they had found the induction at the college very helpful. There is a healthy rivalry between houses; there are organised house events including house singing competitions and house activities in which everyone participates. Senior boarders are able to leave the college in their free time provided they have been given permission by a member of staff. Boarders may also arrange to go into Brighton which is a short train ride away. One boarder said that they did not want to leave the school grounds in their spare time as they preferred to spend time visiting their friends in other houses, or taking part in some of the onsite sports activities. There is a wide range of fortnightly trips arranged for boarders who remain at the college during the weekend. Recent cultural events included a visit to the Tate Modern in addition to the Tower of London. Many of the students enjoy the facilities on offer at the Spectrum Centre in Guildford including bowling, swimming and ice skating. There are excellent provision for trips and visits for boarders including trips to the Gambia, Italy, France and elsewhere in the world. Boarders in junior house said that they enjoyed the evening activities including rifle shooting and climbing at a nearby leisure centre. Some boarders felt that organised outings should occur every weekend as opposed to fortnightly although overall students appreciated the range of activities on offer. The school is aware of the relevant legislation and health and safety guidance that must be taken in relation to school outings. Written risk assessments are completed prior to all school outings or trips taking place in addition to emergency procedures for offsite visits being in place. Parents are informed about offsite trips and are required to give their consent before their child may attend a trip. Boarders are able to spend their spare time reading, using the school's internet facilities, or watching television. In the junior school boarding house children are encouraged to take part in weekly activities in addition to playing board games or joining in with the sporting activities on other evenings. Boarders share positive relationships with staff. Interactions between staff and boarders were relaxed throughout the inspection. The boarders in the junior school were extremely positive about their relationships with staff in their house and many said that there was a family atmosphere. Some of the older students who board felt that staff members were strict but overall fair. Boarders understand the rules and feel that any sanctions or punishments are given out fairly. The Housemaster/mistress responsible for each house maintain a written record of all sanctions given to boarders that is monitored by the deputy headmaster.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

During the course of the inspection the inspectors were accompanied by students from each house when touring the boarding accommodation. All of the boarding houses were found to

be acceptably clean, facilities are generally of a high standard and furnishings are of good quality. Like in any boarding school the boarding houses and furnishings suffer from wear and tear, however overall the facilities for the students could be described as 'better than average'. However there was some concern expressed by the older boys that some of the beds were not long enough and therefore made sleeping difficult. The school has a robust programme of refurbishment and development which was evidenced during the course of the inspection. Each of the houses was found to be well heated and lit at the time of the inspection although some of the students in the junior school commented that the heating was either too hot or too cold. It became apparent in discussion with the Housemaster of the junior school that the heating could not be regulated. All of the sixth form students are accommodated in Woodard House which is a separate purpose building that has been completely refurbished during the last 12 months. This house is where students complete their education at Ardingly College. The house is so designed that students begin to accept far greater responsibility than in the other houses. It is an excellent facility and one that justifiably the school is very proud of. All of the students have their own single study/bedroom while communal accommodation is very spacious and welcoming. The building has a large social area known as the Forum in the centre of the house which is used for various functions. All students have a lockable area for personal possessions and rules are clear about bringing in large amounts of money or valuable personal possessions; this is actively discouraged. Most of the students bring pocket money to the college; they are strongly advised to bank it with their respective Housemaster/mistress. They can draw out money in small sums when the house bank is open. Boarders stated they are quite happy with this arrangement. The overview of other students throughout the school was that they were generally very happy living in their respective houses and most of them spoke highly of the house system. The inspectors noted that there is sufficient toilet and washing facilities as laid down in Standard 44. All students who board at the school have suitable facilities for changing by day. The school has excellent sporting facilities and a well equipped sports hall. There are suitable changing facilities for the students to use when changing for games and other sports. All students who board at the school can make use of the school shop to purchase personal items or stationery. In addition students can access a wide range of shops in Haywards Heath which is nearby.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

A number of different statements of the college's boarding aims exist however there is no single agreed document which can be clearly identified as a 'statement of boarding aims and principles' that covers both the senior and junior boarding units and which is available to parents, students and staff. The college's governing board do not have a clear system or process to monitor welfare provision in the college and no governor is appointed to oversee any boarding aspect of the college. Staffing levels are well managed and staff are able to respond to the varying needs, wishes and activities of the students. The college is developing contingency plans to address any crises that relate to the welfare of the boarders. The college has developed a system of monitoring risk assessments, however there is confusion over the regularity and responsibility for the monitoring of risk assessments relevant to the boarding houses. Electrical appliance testing for college and student equipment is not up to date although arrangements were made at the time of the inspection for external contractors to commence this as a matter of priority. Staff have access to various courses, in good boarding practice, run by the Boarding School Association, however there is a need for boarding staff to undertake further health and safety training, particularly in the areas of risk assessment and fire warden training. An

outstanding security risk assessment in connection with the public access bridleway in front of the college has yet to be completed. College senior management have responsibility for checking boarding house disciplinary records and were verbally able to evidence that they were completed but there was no documented evidence to confirm that these checks had been carried out. All staff, including domestic and pastoral care staff know to whom they are accountable. The number of staff available for the supervision of boarders is sufficient for the number of boarders, the activities they are involved in and the different age and gender groups. Boarders report that they can find a member of staff when they need to and boarders know which member of staff is on duty in the evening and how to access duty staff sleeping in overnight. Staffing for organised trips away from the college is good and exceeds current Government guidance. Any role for spouses or partners of staff within the boarding houses are made clear and all non-staff adults living in the boarding houses are appropriately CRB checked. The college ensures that all new members of boarding staff receive induction training before they start work at the college, including child protection. A number of non-teaching pastoral staff including matrons and domestic staff had not received on-going training in boarding pastoral matters and were unable to easily access the staff handbook. The teaching staff directly involved with boarding take part in a regular boarding appraisal process but other staff in the boarding houses including matrons and ancillary staff do not currently have an appraisal process. Students and parents of both the senior and junior school in the majority of surveys reported that they were satisfied with the level of pastoral care and services provided to the boarding students of the college. The outcome for young people in this section is judged as satisfactory as a number of key standards are met but there are also weaknesses in some procedures and documentation which requires amendment in order to ensure young people are fully protected.

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):

- Implement and develop formal written welfare plans for those students with additional welfare needs.
- Ensure that there is a robust and tight recruitment process in place for all staff and personnel that work on the College site
- implement a written Risk Assessment of public access to the site with specific reference to the public footpaths and review the Security Policy annually.
- Ensure that all persons, such as counsellors, identified to boarders for contact purposes have been subject to full checking procedures in the same manner as school staff, with a satisfactory outcome.

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- Reinforce both the management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding in the college and to ensure that effective monitoring systems for student welfare are in place.
 - Ensure that at governing board level an effective system is put into place to monitor boarding welfare
 - Agree a clear and overarching college boarding policy for both prep and senior school.
 - Monitor on a regular basis and at least twice a term records of senior management checks on risk assessments and complaints with written evidence to verify such checks have taken place.
 - Ensure that all staff with boarding duties receive regular and on-going training in health and safety issues to include risk assessment and fire warden training.
 - Ensure a more comprehensive and consistent appraisal process is developed to encompass all staff with boarding responsibilities.
 - Ensure all staff, including matrons, domestic and ancillary personnel have access to the staff handbook, both in hard copy form and preferably also via the intranet, in order to allow them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.
 - ensure that the heating in the dormitories in the junior house can be regulated and is sufficiently warm in winter.
 - ensure that the complaints procedure for students is reviewed and clarified as at present it does not state the procedure if a student is not satisfied with the decision of the Deputy Head.