

Bilton Grange School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Warren Clarke
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Date of last inspection	18 May 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

The school is situated outside the village of Dunchurch, approximately three miles from Rugby and with easy access to the M1 and M6 motorways. Bilton Grange was founded in 1873 as a boarding school for boys, but now operates on a co-educational basis with a Pre-prep department. The school provides education for children from aged four to 13 years. Boarding is offered to children above eight years old, and many pupils access boarding on a weekly or more flexible basis. Among those who board are pupils from overseas.

Summary

This announced key inspection was conducted over four days during term time when the school provides full, weekly, and flexible boarding for 73 children including some from overseas. Performance against all the key standards was assessed.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection was the first for the school against all of the relevant National Minimum Standards (NMS). The occasion was used to assess the extent to which those standards were met. The outcome was that there were substantial shortfalls eliciting recommended actions in 12 areas and less significant deficits leading to 18 recommendations. Within the Every Child Matters national outcomes for children, seven of the recommended actions and six recommendations were in the staying safe sphere. Those focusing on protection from abuse necessitated action to align the child protection policy with that of the Local safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), staff training in this regard and more robust anti-bullying strategies. Also, to ensure that children and adult stakeholders are made aware that they may express any concerns or complaint about the school to the regulator, by including its contact details in the complaints procedure promotional information. These matters have been satisfactorily attended. There have been no safeguarding referrals since the last inspection and boarders report that the school is effective in both preventing and dealing with bullying. A recommendation that clarification on 'the extent and use of prefect sanctions' is deemed met since prefects have no authority to impose sanctions. The shortfall in the agreement in regard to safeguarding children's expectations on staff and members of their family who live on the school premises, has been addressed. There is a written agreement between resident staff as to expectation of their conduct and that of their family and visitors in relation to the protection of children. A requirement to introduce systems to demonstrate rigor in vetting staff's suitability has also been fulfilled. Documents seen in this connection demonstrate that this has been attended with requisite care. In relation to protecting boarders from harm, the registered person was required to strengthen fire safety, namely carrying out fire risk assessment of the premises, fire drills within specified minimum frequency and ensure accurate recording of fire precaution measures. These have all been fulfilled. This, together with other health and safety precautions recommended such as risk assessment of all areas of the school and safety checks of gas, electricity supply and equipment, is now rigorously monitored and documented. In the being healthy outcome area the school was required to provide a water fountain in a specific area for boarders, and to assemble sufficient information about their physical and emotional health history and needs. Further, to use this data to inform individual boarding welfare plans.

Additionally, the school was required to ensure that its medication policy conforms to safe practice as conveyed in the 2003 guidance of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, and to organise the surgery more efficiently. The deficits that these recommendations were intended to address have been successfully attended. Boarders with health problems have their needs met and the health care arrangements, including receipt, storage and administration of medication elicited no critical observations. Since the last inspection the school has introduced a wide range of opportunities for boarders to give their views and opinions about how they are being looked after. Boarders consider that their views are taken seriously and were able to cite several examples of changes made as a result of this. This, therefore, addresses the shortfalls in the positive contribution outcome group. The outcome area, economic well-being elicited two recommendations to ensure deep cleaning of dining furniture and to make more private the boarders' bathing facilities. The dining furniture is presented in clean condition and bathing facilities now provide boarders reasonable privacy. Another two recommendations in this area, which have been fulfilled required conduct of an audit of space in the boarding houses to 'address a programme of maintenance and renewal'. Also, to yield more private study areas for girls and storage of their possessions. This has resulted in some refurbishment of bathrooms and reconfiguration of living space. Documentary evidence of staff training demonstrates that the school has responded effectively to the recommendations for a coherent boarding staff training and development programme. All boarding staff, including non-teaching members participate in relevant aspects of the in-service training programme and this is supplemented by external Boarding Schools Association courses according to need, as ascertained in the staff appraisal process.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' health and proper development are effectively safeguarded and promoted in a system which is well resourced and in which staff deploy those resources with skill and efficiency. A well-equipped surgery, professionally qualified nurse with valid registration and arrangements with local primary health care services, such as GP's, dentists and opticians, provide the means to respond effectively to boarders health needs. The GP arrangements are such that where boarders are ill and attention of a doctor is warranted this takes place on a same-day basis to facilitate early diagnosis, treatment and recovery. Surgery arrangements, underpinned by the school's excellent boarders' health policy, establish a system in which all relevant information about boarders health is assembled and, in each case, a health care plan setting out a precise care regimen for meeting the particular boarder's needs. In all cases, the school obtains written parental consent for its staff to act to arrange medical treatment, including administration of prescribed, non-prescribed medication and first aid. This effectively removes any potential for confusion or misunderstanding of the extent of staff's duty to safeguard and promote boarders' health. Boarders with known health conditions are assured care of a very high standard as demonstrated in the well-established and effective health care planning system for those with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, asthma and allergy-related conditions. The health plans draw upon the school's experience and current best practice in the care of the aforementioned conditions. The surgery is equipped and staff are skilled to respond efficiently to routine care of those conditions and when debilitating episodes are at risk of affecting a boarder's well-being and education. In this regard, the school nurse is available to boarders throughout the day and sick bay facilities in the surgery and boarding houses enable sick boarders to be monitored and attended in ways that counter isolation. Above all, boarders understand the health care arrangements, are content with them and have confidence in, and respect for, those involved

in this aspect of their care. All except the most recently appointed care staff having had first aid training and the school nurse being in attendance at school sports events, assisted by St John's Ambulance Brigade for major occasions, means that qualified or trained personnel are always available to respond to boarders' injuries, and minor illness. Where boarders have sustained injuries as was evident in particular instances, the particular individuals consider that they are treated well and facilities and support are made available for them to continue most of their usual activities in relative comfort. Arrangements for the safe custody of boarders' medication are informed by a clear policy and procedures, which have the effect of causing all medication to be stored in secure and appropriate conditions. For example, all medicines are kept in the surgery where the key to the medication cabinet is restricted to particular staff and where refrigeration facilities are provided to allow for those medicines which require this condition. Potential risk to boarders from unsupervised access to, and inappropriate use of, medicines is greatly reduced. Records and the keeping of them in relation to boarders' medication are maintained to a very high standard. They are current and accurately account for all medicines received for each child and record precise details of that which has been given. This establishes an audit trail, reduces scope for error and ensures the likely efficacy of the medication. In relation to the promotion of boarders health, the school's policies, practices and aspects of the curriculum such as physical health and social education, physical education and religious studies combine to promote boarders physical and emotional good health (PHSE). School catering promotes healthy eating both in equipping boarders with an understanding of how to eat to maintain good health and in the excellent quality, variety and nutritious meals provided. This is complemented by the physical education aspect of the curriculum and active leisure pursuits that ensure boarders get enough physical exercise to promote health and strength. PHSE, programmes, school rules, religious studies and staff's opportunistic guidance provide understanding of the adverse effects of lifestyle and sub-culture activities such as illicit drug taking and smoking on health. Religious studies combined with PHSE which teaches boarders basic human relationships skills at a level appropriate to their age and understanding, contribute to the supportive and friendly school ethos that exists and which promotes good emotional health. In this connection, some parents reflect upon high level of support boarders receive in circumstances of bereavement and other difficulties. Practical arrangements in place to maintain boarders in good health include ample indoor and outdoor space, clean, orderly and warm living quarters. Facilities such as bathrooms and toilets are provided in the ratio prescribed by relevant standards and all those facilities are maintained in good working order. For example, a sample of showers are seen in working order as is the hot and the hot cold water supply. Wash hand facilities are provided in all the places where they should be and hygiene measures such as washing hands before eating are well instituted. The majority of boarders express satisfaction with the washing and bathing facilities, which enables them to maintain good personal hygiene. Other measures such as those in place for control of infection, the plan for the event of outbreak of infectious diseases and the arrangements for safe disposal of 'sharps' and unused or discontinued medication all conform to good practice in safeguarding health. Boarders' experience of their health care, as elicited in a survey, is that the majority consider that they always receive the care they need when are unwell.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Boarders are being protected from abuse, neglect and other forms of unfavourable treatment by the school's robust and coherent safeguarding strategy. The counter bullying policy defines bullying and sets out a clear strategy to prevent or as necessary address it where it appears.

Staff have received training and briefings in this regard, and a senior member of staff is made responsible for keeping the school apprised of research and development on this issue so that the approach it adopts can be updated in line with best practice. Promotion of anti-bullying in school, including boarding, is imparted effectively to boarders. They recognise bullying as socially abhorrent and contrary to the friendly school ethos they consider staff foster. Boarders report knowing the school rule about bullying. There are various sources within school, such as assembly, form tutors and in PHSE lessons, from which they get information about it. The consensus among them is that bullying is not a problem in the school generally nor in boarding. Where it occasionally occurs senior staff deals with it effectively. They regard the boarding houses as welcoming, their peers as supportive and friendly, and perceive any attempt to bully others in school as attracting social disapproval. Some boarders do, however, recognise that there are sometimes disagreements among them and hurtful remarks are occasionally made. This is borne out by the discipline record, which shows that these instances are few and are dealt with proportionately and in ways that are helpful to all involved. Practical measures taken to reduce risk of bullying include risk assessment of times and identify areas of the school where it might be likely to occur. Supervision is heightened where potential for bullying is identified. A well formulated and clear child protection policy, recently reviewed and approved by governors, is in place. Importantly, together with other procedures and established practices, it is sufficiently rigorous to provide effective protection of boarders from abuse and prejudicial treatment. The policy is regularly reviewed. Staff at all levels and prefects have received child protection training or briefing appropriate to their roles and responsibilities. The nature of the training and briefing is deemed more than adequate to equip those persons to identify and report any safeguarding concerns efficiently. Boarders recognising staff's intervention to protect them from bullying and, in some cases, observing that if staff harm them serious consequences would ensue, suggest that they are aware of the policy to safeguard them. There are no current safeguarding matters under investigation and no allegations since the last inspection. Promotion of boarders' good conduct and the school's approach to their disciplining is informed by a thoughtfully considered and embedded behaviour management policy. The policy promotes good conduct, application and consideration for the comfort and feelings of others. These attract recognitions in 'good marks' and other positive reinforcement. Rules are few, considered fair by boarders, and they are underpinned by consideration of health, safety and the well-being of the school's population. Consequences for transgressing the rules are equally clear. They are within the acceptable bounds of permitted sanctions and also deemed fair by boarders. Although there is a hierarchy of sanctions, varying in severity according to the misdemeanour, typically, those imposed are in the realms of 'bad marks', loss of break time and ban from certain social events. Boarders and staff consider the school's approach to behaviour management effective and this is confirmed by the record of discipline and the friendliness and mutual respect observed. Complaints, both as a means of protecting boarders by giving them the opportunity to report concerns and of quality assurance monitoring, are promoted to boarders in their guide, Helping Hands. The guide presents the complaints procedure in a format appropriate to boarders' age and, in accordance with the NMS, provides information of legitimate agencies such as Ofsted or Childline to which they can turn with any concerns. Giving boarders a voice both collectively and individually means that any concerns they have are taken up with house or senior staff and dealt with informally and immediately. The few complaints which have been made are by parents in relation to conflicts between their children and others. These issues are taken seriously and shown to be resolved satisfactorily. Among a raft of health and safety measures taken to protect boarders from harm, are fire precautions informed by assessment of risks, which are reviewed periodically. Fire detection and alarm system in place,

fire fighting equipment together with regular tests and servicing of these, and the training, instructions and drills carried out provide effective safeguards for boarders. There are no recorded or reported fire incidents at the school since the last inspection. Safe caring practices employed in the care of boarders ensure they are adequately supervised, but do not have their privacy compromised, for example when bathing or engaged in other intimate aspects of self-care. Staff are discreet and do not place themselves in situations that might lead to embarrassment or misunderstanding in this regard. The school affords boarders protection from unsuitable staff by employing robust systems to establish their fitness. A checklist facilitates that all the relevant checks, including enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) disclosure, have been carried out. This applies to all staff for whom all the relevant checks have been conducted and their suitability established. Where gap students are employed, the school applies a similar vetting process. However, since they are recruited from overseas, it is not possible for the school to obtain CRB disclosures before they take up their post. This represents a shortfall in meeting the relevant standard because despite all the other rigorous checks, a certificate of good conduct has not been obtained for each of those employed. Boarders consider that they are safe at school, protected from harm by an extensive range of security and other measures, examples of which they cite. These include CCTV, night security patrol, controlled entry to main reception and measures to deter intruders and control visitors access to boarding house and other buildings used by pupils. None of these measures are judged to infringe boarders' privacy or unreasonably restrict their liberty within the school premises. As a safeguarding measure all visitors are directed to the main reception where the purpose of their visit is established, their identity checked and their presence recorded. This enables them to be supervised and their access to boarders controlled. Where boarders journey out from school whilst resident, they do so accompanied and by school transport, drivers of which are employees. Boarders are, therefore, protected from any risk associated with being transported by adults who have not been vetted. The school's excellent practice of ensuring parents or guardians enter the premises to be identified before their children are handed into their care proves not only to be a safety measure, but also provides opportunities for them to meet with staff. The experience of boarders and their perception in relation to being protected from harm at school is that the majority consider that this is always the case and the others believe this to be so usually or sometimes. That significant numbers refer to measures such as control and supervision of their use of the internet, in addition to there being many health and safety rules together with other examples cited above suggest their recognition of the umbrella of safety that surrounds them. This is captured in some responses that simply state that all the staff care about them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders enjoy a good quality of life enhanced by the excellent arrangements that the school makes to assure a wide range of stimulating leisure activities. They have access to diverse sources of support for personal difficulties and are treated with equity in relation to their individual needs. Boarders express satisfaction with the extensive range of extra-curricular activities and leisure pursuits that the school provides. These are made available and so organised as to cater for each boarder's particular interest and encourage participation in new events. In some instances these activities involve sports and creative and performing arts, which contribute to skill acquisition and personal development. This is reflected in some boarders observing that there is a sense of real satisfaction when you complete something, that it is fun outside of lesson times, activities are 'cool', they are sometimes exciting and the outings provide a great deal of pleasure. A measure of the school's recognition of the needs of boarders in this regard

is also demonstrated in permitting them to keep their small pets, such as rats and hamsters, at school. Proper provisions are made for the care of these pets, and it is some of this finer attention to detail in the care of the boarders that they consider reflects the excellence of school provisions. The school's boarding welfare policy gives due regard to the personal support needs of boarders taking account of their age, separation from family and, in some cases, living in a different culture. A friendly school ethos is fostered and achieved, in which all staff are approachable and pupils consider they are friendly and helpful. Boarding houses are established on a basis that achieves a close approximation of home life with a core of permanent and relatively long serving house parents some of whom have dual roles as teachers. Permanence, consistency and continuity enable boarders to establish good relationships with staff and build trust exemplified in the relaxed and confident ways in which they relate. In essence, boarders have a range of adults in school to whom they may turn with any personal problems they may have. These include teachers, tutors, and house staff. The spread of staff boarders consider they would approach is almost equal in measure. In regard to the provision of persons independent of the school to whom boarders might take their personal problems, whilst a discrete counsellor is not employed in this capacity, the Honorary Chaplain and lead GP fulfil this role. Childline and Ofsted are also promoted as legitimate bodies in this regard reducing further the risk of any child being without a source of support should they not feel able to approach those immediately involved in their care and education. Each boarder's care is underpinned by a welfare plan, which takes account of needs arising from their sex, health, disabilities, religion and linguistic background. Boarding houses are organised so that needs in relation to boarders' sex is precisely and sensitively provided. For example houses are on a single-sex basis and those for female boarders are staffed with predominantly female staff, which means that aspects such as support with intimate care are provided sensitively. All school resources provide equal access though in sports certain facilities for boys and girls are equal, but different. Children are integrated and have strong allegiance to the school expressing a sense of belonging as reflected in their experience of feeling included, always having people to talk to and mutual support among each other. Pupils are generally integrated in class and in friendship groups outside. Similarly, in boarding, they are not in any way segregated on the basis of race or nationality. Suitable provisions are made for those who need support with language. Of particular note is that the school not only demonstrates its commitment to equality and diversity by its deeds, it also equips pupils both in the formal and informal curriculum with knowledge so as to shape their own behaviour in this regard. For example, the concept of empathy is conveyed as are equality and diversity issues. Accordingly, amongst boarders, and pupils generally, there is a confident and respectful demeanour, friendliness and consideration for others.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders consider that they are valued and well looked after, in part, due to being listened to by staff and their reasonable requests and suggestions acted upon. A measure of the extent to which the school goes to give pupils a voice and hear them when they use it, is demonstrated in the range of forums and other sources that boarders consider are available to them to give expression to their views and opinions. The school council is identified by most boarders as the principal means by which their views and opinions on matters concerning school and boarding are represented. Additionally there are prefects and house captains who act as effective conduits of boarders views. This provides the additional benefit of boarders being able to establish rapport with these representatives some of whom they come to regard as sources they can turn

to with any personal concerns that they have. Boarders are unanimous in their opinion that the school has in place mechanisms for hearing and acting on their views though a small minority are not always satisfied with some the outcomes. Half all of boarders consider that they always have means to express their views on the operation of the boarding and others believe this to be the case usually. Mostly they cite house meetings and routine and opportunistic discussions with house staff as the way in which they get their views across on boarding issues. The school recognises and has sympathy with some boarders' views that, amongst all the other matters that school council consider, boarding issues may not be given the requisite prominence. Measures to address this feature in current planning. Boarders give as examples, the provision of a water fountain, re-introduction of bread rolls and agreement to construct an adventure playground on the school premises as being among some of the responses to expression of their views. The majority view amongst boarders is that the school is excellent in that staff listen and even if they do not agree with boarders' views about what should happen in the boarding houses, they still bring them to the attention of the headmaster. Some boarders simply value the staff who are always around for them to talk with and that everyone is so kind and helpful. Contact arrangements, as conveyed in their respective guides, are made clear to boarders and parents, including those from overseas. The arrangements are sufficiently flexible and parents are given full details of the key boarding staff involved in their children's care so that they have a direct point of contact to make enquiries about progress and welfare. Payphones are available to boarders to make calls in private and they can also receive calls in the boarding houses. The availability of e-mail to all boarders and mobile phones to those from overseas also facilitate contact. Boarders, significant numbers of whom go home at weekends, are satisfied with these provisions. Arrangements in which boarders go home every third weekend and the school's policy of not providing holiday boarding, means that they are not confined to school for excessive periods. Boarders are content with these arrangements.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The exceptional quality of boarders' care is maintained by effective management and leadership, which ensure resources are deployed efficiently and employed effectively. The outcome of this is that boarders are healthy, happy and report having feelings of well-being. A written statement of boarding principles and practice together with a portfolio of other policies, procedures and guidance culminate in a sound rationale for the care of boarders. Essentially, it sets out clearly the objectives for maintaining their health, safety and general welfare to promote, individually, their proper development and contribute to their educational attainment. The coherence of the rationale and its successful application are attributed to the outstanding performance reported in the preceding sections of this report. Importantly, boarders understand how the school is run and are content with how they are being looked after. Governors and senior staff discharge their monitoring and scrutiny duties efficiently. They ensure that events, such as complaints, by or on behalf of boarders and incidents necessitating imposition of sanctions, are kept under review so that any undesirable patterns can be identified and addressed in timely fashion. No such patterns are evident. All aspects of health and safety within the school are rigorously assessed and monitored to ensure that boarders are protected from harm. For example, accidents are monitored and where there are indications that control measures might need to be taken to prevent recurrence, such measures are put into effect. The 'near miss' initiative,

which requires reporting of incidents where there is potential for harm exemplifies diligence in this regard. Accident and injury sustained by boarders are few, minor in nature, and they are largely associated with sports. An established system of staff development and training including induction of new staff and gap students, supervision and appraisal ensures that they are enabled to discharge their duties effectively to meet boarders' needs and thereby fulfil the school's expectations. This together with there being sufficient staff during all parts of the days assures high levels of supervision of boarders and allocation of time for their basic physical care needs to be attended and for each child to receive appropriate individual attention. So successful are these arrangements some boarders liken, in complimentary terms, their care at school to that at home.

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, for each gap student employed, a 'certificate of good conduct' or equivalent from the relevant authorities of the student's home country where such facilities are available (NMS 38.5).