

Dorset House School

Inspection report for boarding school

Unique reference number	SC014487
Inspection date	21 October 2008
Inspector	Bridgette Lowe
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	4 January 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

Dorset House School is a small co-educational school that provides weekly boarding for boys in years five to eight. Boarders are able to experience boarding through trial boarding nights and part weekly boarding as well as weekly boarding. The school is set in Bury within 18 acres of park land and on the banks of the river Arun. The boys' dormitories are set within the main manor house. The school has extensive playing fields and an adventure playground in the woodland area. The school aims to preserve the feeling of an extended family and the majority of boarders choose to board as there is no compulsion to do so. Boarding plays a vital part in the overall development allowing further opportunities for mutual respect to develop in a close community.

Summary

The purpose of the inspection is to ensure that the responsible person safeguards and promotes the welfare of children accommodated there and that the school is continuing to meet the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. One inspector carried out this inspection over two days covering all the Boarding School key National Minimum Standards. The majority of boarding pupils completed a questionnaire prior to the inspection and were interviewed by the inspector in the course of the inspection. A survey was sent to the parents of boarders with a few responses. Those parents that did respond gave, on balance, very positive feedback. Dorset House School operates within a family environment providing a high level of pastoral care. The school demonstrates good attention to health care where boarders feel well looked after if unwell. Personal, social and health education is embedded within general school life. Meals provided have improved and now provide nutritious and well-balanced choices. There are some weaknesses in provisions to safeguard boarders and the school does not meet all of the key National Minimum Standards in this area. The recruitment process is not robust and therefore does not protect boarders. Some staff have commenced employment before satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau checks and references have been received. Child protection training has not been undertaken by all staff, however, the newly appointed head teacher and Child Protection Liaison Officer is implementing a plan to ensure all staff receive a formal child protection briefing. Boarders benefit from good levels of individual support resulting in good outcomes. This, coupled with the strong nurturing relationships that exist between staff and boarders, fosters a real sense of family living and boarders were unanimous in their views that they 'love boarding'. The school clearly demonstrates its commitment to anti-discriminatory practice in a strong caring manner. There are various forums, both formal and informal, for boarders to contribute their views to the boarding practice. A very good choice of extra curricular activities are strong reasons why boarders choose to board. There are ineffective means of monitoring in areas such as recruitment and risk assessment. The boarding team are supported by a very dedicated and committed head of boarding who is motivated to continue to improve boarding standards. Boarders' behaviour was observed to be exemplary throughout the inspection. Boarders reported being very happy at the school and well supported by boarding staff. Comments made by pupils are very positive such as 'Dorset House is the perfect school for me' and 'staff are kind and you feel like you are at home'.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last boarding welfare inspection in 2003, the school has demonstrated good development and improvements in many areas. The school was recommended to provide staff and parents with a range of policies and practice guidance on boarding welfare issues. The school has made huge developments in this area producing a range of policies and procedures which staff follow to ensure boarders' welfare is promoted and protected. Policies and practices are continually under review. The school was also issued with a notice to improve their recruitment practices which were consequently followed up by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. It is clear that a great deal of work has been undertaken to address deficiencies in recruitment practices, but the school still does not meet National Minimum Standards in this area to ensure pupils are appropriately safeguarded. The school was also recommended to improve records relating to health and welfare matters. There have been very good developments in this area with clear records being held and detailed information relating to each boarder's health and welfare needs. The school has made improvements to the boarding environment including adding new light shades, pictures, posters and stickers to make the environment more appealing to children. Safety measures have been undertaken within dormitories with old heating pipes being covered to prevent children from burning themselves on contact. The school has acted proactively in response to boarders and parents' views following concerns raised about the school's choice of food, specifically the supper menu. Boarders have been consulted about the evening meal and improvements have been made to ensure boarders receive a hot meal which is balanced and nutritious. Improvements have also been made to the breakfast which boarders all reported being the best meal of the day.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The staff actively put into effect the school's health education policies and procedures and integrate these into their daily practice. The pupil's health and emotional wellbeing is very well met by all boarding staff and the school's matrons. Pupils reported being well educated about personal and social health education, particularly in keeping themselves safe and respect for each other. 100% of pupils who completed questionnaires reported always being well cared for when ill. The development of clear and organised medical records and information held on boarders ensures that boarders' health information is kept up to date and staff are fully aware of boarders' health and welfare needs. Boarders' specific health needs are managed effectively and sensitively with staff consulting with relevant health professionals to ensure pupils' needs are consistently met. Staff are first aid trained, however, refresher training was due for some staff and relevant courses had been organised. The school's matrons are a valuable asset to the boarding and school staff team. The senior matron demonstrates an exceptional regard to safeguarding boarding pupils and is acutely aware of the specific health and emotional needs of all boarding pupils. The school operates a well developed medication policy, procedure and practice guidance which specifically addresses the use of prescribed and non prescribed medication. There is a clear audit process of pupils' medication. Pupils reported feeling well cared for if they were unwell and confirmed a range of staff they feel they could go to for support if needed. The medication storage and recording systems are safe and full details are held of any accident or injury that boarders may sustain. The catering staff responsible for the provision and preparation of meals have improved menus and food provided to boarders. Boarders and staff reported positive changes to the food made available and reported more nutritious hot and balanced food being on offer throughout every meal. Staff are responsive

to concerns raised by pupils and endeavour to offer solutions if the pupils are not satisfied with aspects of the menu. Catering staff have undertaken basic food hygiene training and actions and recommendations set by Environmental Health have been satisfactorily addressed. The pupils are positively encouraged and educated about healthy living and great attention is paid to providing a good range of food to meet individual needs. Fruit is available throughout the day and evenings and pupils with specific health needs are well catered for. Boarders reported enjoying the 'buns' snack in the evening which consists of toast and hot chocolate.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Boarders are unanimous in their views that there is no bullying at Dorset House School and report that all pupils are very kind to each other. Boarders and staff are very clear what the school's policy on bullying is. Staff are unquestionably committed to tackling and educating pupils about bullying and the impact it has on others. Pupils are involved in raising awareness of internet safety and cyber bullying. Boarders are protected from a staff team that understand their responsibility to protect and safeguard children. The staff team have access to child protection training; however, some staff working within the school have yet to receive any formal child protection briefing. The school's head master and child liaison officer have planned to involve all staff in child protection briefings within the next half term. Boarders' safety is promoted and staff are fully aware of the correct procedures to report any allegations or child protection issues. Boarders confirm that they feel safe and staff give a high priority to keeping them safe. The management of behaviour is based on pupils valuing each other and treating all members of the school community with politeness, courtesy and respect. Boarders confirm that standards of acceptable behaviour are clearly known and respond to these guidelines. Staff were observed to be respectful of boarders and respond to them in a positive light. Any incidents are fully recorded although these were very few and far between within the boarding houses. Pupils' behaviour was observed to be exemplary on inspection. Boarders reported that 'school teachers are kind and not strict and some are funny; they help us when needed. All the boys are friendly and it is easy to make friends'. The school has a complaints procedure in place which is readily available. Posters are displayed in boarding areas informing boarders of how to make a complaint if they are not happy. The school's complaints policy and procedure highlights Ofsted's details if boarders or parents have a boarding welfare concern. There have been no complaints raised in relation to boarders' welfare. There is a high awareness among staff and boarders of the fire safety precautions. All boarders and staff are given fire safety instructions. Regular fire safety evacuations take place and fire safety equipment is checked regularly and detailed records kept. Boarders demonstrate a very good understanding of the school's fire evacuation procedure. Staff at the school have not undertaken fire safety training for some time. Staff show a high regard for the privacy of the boarders. Gap students working at the school are clear about their duty to safeguard pupils and ensure they respect boarders' privacy when they are in their dormitories or preparing for bed. Pupils confirm that staff are respectful of their privacy when having showers. The school's system for recruiting staff is not robust and therefore does not fully protect the boarders. Staffing files do not have the information required to comply with the relevant standard. On many files sampled, there were no interview records and in some cases no references. It is evident that in some instances Criminal Records Bureau checks have not been undertaken on staff having contact with children, and some staff have commenced employment prior to the school receiving satisfactory suitability checks. Staff responsible for recruitment have not undertaken safer recruitment training as advised by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. There are, however, effective

systems to ensure all pupils are protected from visitors to the school site and the recruitment procedures undertaken for the newly appointed head teacher were very thorough and robust. The school has a good health and safety policy, although only basic risk assessments were evidenced on inspection in relation to the boarding environment. There was little evidence on inspection to show that thorough risk assessments had been undertaken for off site and high risk activities. Staff take particular efforts to ensure boarders are free from avoidable hazards throughout the school and boarding environments were observed to be safe and free from hazards. Staff responsible for this area of responsibility have not received training in health and safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The school has a very good approach to providing boarders with a wide range of support and opportunities that encourages them to achieve educationally and socially to their fullest potential. The school welcomes and celebrates the diversity of all its boarders and treat each child as an individual. Boarders are very clear which members of staff they can go to for personal support and the school has clear guidance for staff and boarders about how such support is provided and makes sure each boarder is given information about this. Boarders reported that staff 'are caring and supportive', and 'boarding feels like home'. The school has an independent visitor although the boarders reported never needing to see her as 'they are very happy at the school'. The school offers a very good range of extra curricular activities in the evenings which pupils reported being one reason for choosing boarding. It was apparent on inspection that boarders genuinely enjoyed their boarding experience. Boarders clearly reported 'loving boarding' especially as it was their choice to board and they could have 'fun with their friends' in a 'small community feel'. The boys were especially grateful for staff playing 'manhunt' which was a firm favourite with all the boarders and enjoyed activities such as tennis, football and judo.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The school promotes positive communication within a nurturing family atmosphere. There are good systems for listening and obtaining the views of boarders which are important to the development of boarding. Boarders are able to have a say about developments at the school or enable change to take place in relation to boarding practice. Staff respond to boarders in a very positive and supportive way and boarders are very positive about their relationship with staff. The school demonstrates a positive attitude to boarders' family and parental contact. Boarders are able to use personal mobile phones at the boarding house and all boarders have access to a phone. Boarders are able to use the internet to communicate with family and friends and are educated to use this appropriately. Boarders reported that weekly or part weekly boarding is popular due to the fact that boarders can still maintain a lot of contact with their families. Responses received from parents were generally very positive about boarding within the school with such comments as boarding provides 'a caring, small and fun environment' and 'the school replicates the pastoral care of home in a nurturing environment with well organised and diverse activities in the evenings'. Boarders reported good support systems to ensure new boarders are welcomed to the boarding environment. All new boarders are assigned a house captain who assists them to familiarise themselves with the boarding routines and environment. All new boarders are fully supported by staff to feel comfortable with boarding and should a child become homesick parents are able to come and collect their child.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school provides a good standard of accommodation for its boarders with recent improvements to the 'south' dormitory. The accommodation provided is comfortable, well lit and heated. There is a good standard of maintenance and cleanliness throughout. Boarding staff are proactive in responding to maintenance issues and ensuring they are satisfactorily resolved in order to provide a comfortable boarding environment for the pupils. Boarders reported being very happy with their dormitories and were keen to show the inspector their rooms and how they had personalised their individual areas. It is clear that boarders appreciate their environment and are able to have an input into decoration and furnishings, however, many mattresses were seen to be in need of urgent replacement as they are very old and boarders reported them to be uncomfortable. Dormitories were observed to be bright and colourful and personalised by boarding pupils in a manner that made them feel at home. Boarders reported that there are enough shower and washing facilities. However, many boys prefer to use the only power shower available as opposed to the older press button showers, as the water remained on constantly. The boarders and staff confirmed the staggered bed time for older and younger boarders worked to reduce unnecessary queuing at shower time. Boarders are well supported to ensure good levels of hygiene are maintained without intrusive supervision at these times.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school has a new head teacher who joined the school in September 2008. On inspection he demonstrated a genuine commitment to ensuring the school meets National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and that any shortfalls would be rectified. The staff team responsible for pastoral care are highly valued and unquestionably committed to boarders' welfare. The style of management ensures that staff are clear about their tasks and responsibilities and the boarding team are continually developing boarding practice with support from the head of boarding. The school fully meets its boarding aim of 'providing a warm, homely, caring and safe atmosphere to ensure that children are happy and are considerate of one another'. The school provides a very clear detailed statement of boarding principles and practice that is available to parents, boarders and staff. All information relating to boarding and welfare practices is updated and clearly accessible for parents on the school's website. There are clear lines of communication and accountability within the management of the boarding provision and staff meet regularly to discuss boarding issues. The organisation of the boarding house gives full consideration to safeguarding the welfare of boarders and ensures staff receive ongoing training to equip them with the skills to provide a high standard of care to boarders. The head teacher is to introduce an excellent annual appraisal for boarding staff to include feedback from parents and boarders of their contribution to boarding practice. The school ensures that boarding staff have access to comprehensive written guidance on boarding policies and practices. The school has a system of risk assessments, however, evidence on inspection is that these have not always been completed and risk assessments seen are basic in their content. The school has some effective systems for monitoring in place for overseeing complaints, punishments and health related matters. Various daily and weekly meetings take place to ensure the head master is kept abreast of boarding issues. However, the systems of monitoring and recording of matters relating to recruitment and risk assessments are barely satisfactory. The recruitment process falls short of the expectations set out in the National

Minimum Standards. The head master stated at inspection that he would undertake full monitoring in the future, of all risk assessments and staff suitability checks undertaken. The school's bursar is aware of any issues concerning the boarding environment and endeavours to listen to boarders' views and remedy any health and safety concerns. Boarders are well aware of areas that are out of bounds and respect the safety advice given by staff. The number of staff available for the supervision of boarders is good for the number of boarders. Boarders report that they have no difficulty finding a member of staff when they need to and it was clear on inspection that they value the staff support and commitment to boarding pupils. Evidence obtained during the inspection indicated that the boarding provision was being managed in a nurturing and well organised manner to ensure that physical, social and emotional needs of the pupils are being met. Comments received from boarders are very positive about Dorset House School such as 'this is the perfect school for me', 'really good school boarding is great' and 'I am very happy with boarding at Dorset House School'.

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 staff have undertaken fire safety training to further safeguard boarding pupils (NMS 26)
- ensure old and uncomfortable mattresses are replaced as soon as possible to ensure boarders receive a comfortable night's sleep (NMS 42)
- implement a rigorous recruitment process to include clear evidencing within personnel files, incorporating all elements as per NMS 38 for all staff (NMS 38)
- ensure all staff have child protection training to ensure boarders are appropriately protected and safeguarded (NMS 3)
- ensure the member of staff responsible for recruitment undertakes Safer Recruitment training (NMS 38)
- ensure effective monitoring of risk assessments and recruitment procedures is undertaken (NMS 23)
- ensure risk assessments are completed for all off site and high risk activities (NMS 29)

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.