

# Pipers Corner School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspection date</b>	7 November 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Lucy Martin
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<b>Address</b>	Pipers Corner School Ltd Pipers Lane Great Kingshill HIGH WYCOMBE Buckinghamshire HP15 6LP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 719800
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Helen Ness-Gifford
<b>Head / Principal</b>	Helen Ness-Gifford
<b>Nominated person</b>	
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	22 March 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**

Pipers Corner school is an independent day and boarding school for 500 girls aged four to 18 years. It is situated 30 miles from London in the Buckinghamshire countryside but within a short distance from major towns and all amenities. There are two boarding houses situated within school buildings - one for junior boarders in the main school building and the other for senior boarders in a building with classrooms. The school has extensive grounds which provide sporting and recreational facilities. At the time of this inspection there are 33 boarders living in the two boarding houses.

### **Summary**

This was an announced inspection carried out by one inspector over two days, which covered all the key National Minimum Standards. Overall, the school provides a good level of care to boarders. Boarders feel safe and the vast majority enjoy their experience of boarding. The numbers of boarders are small and this ensures a community, family like atmosphere. There are extremely low levels of bullying and the boarders receive high levels of support from a number of staff at the school and outside. Parents feel that the staff communicate well with them and that they provide a safe and friendly environment for their children. There have been significant changes to the operation of boarding since September 2008 with the appointment of a new head of boarding and a new senior housemistress. As a result of these changes, a number of handbooks, documents and policies have been reviewed. There are recommendations made to review some medical and recruitment procedures; also to update the child protection procedures and to review security in the boarding houses. These would ensure best practice in terms of keeping boarders safe from harm. The judgements in this report have been made using new benchmarking guidance that was implemented from 1st April 2008. Information about this guidance can be found on the Ofsted website. The new basis for making judgements is not directly comparable with that used previously.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The school was last inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in January 2006. The focus of that inspection was to follow up the recommendations made at the last full inspection in March 2004. All the recommendations made in March 2004 had been met and one new recommendation was made to ensure that new Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are carried out before any new staff start employment at the school. This is still not being done in every appointment and a recommendation has been made to review the staff recruitment procedures.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

The boarders' health needs are well met at the school. There is a weekly programme of Personal Social and Health Education as part of the curriculum and regular information sessions are held during the day for pupils and during the evening for parents on various health topics. The school has policies and procedures in place on the appropriate response to alcohol, smoking and drug abuse. The school has a school nurse who is on duty during weekdays. There is close

liaison with a local General Practitioner who holds surgeries at the school for boarders. All the boarding staff have attended first aid training and the school nurse has attended other training relevant to her position. When pupils first start at the school, a form is completed giving medical details and consent to non-prescribed medication but there is not sufficient detail for boarders and does not include consent for first aid and to seek medical treatment and emergency dental or optical treatment when required. There are sound systems in place to record all medication, treatment and first aid administered to boarders. Information is passed to the boarding houses by the nurse at the end of her working day to ensure that the boarding staff are fully aware of any health concerns. All medication is securely stored in the surgery or in the office of the two boarding houses. A pharmacist has recently visited the school to inspect the storage and administration of medication and was impressed by the standard of record keeping and the storage of medicines at the school. The recording of prescribed medication is undertaken slightly differently in the surgery to the boarding houses. The administration of prescribed medication does not stand out and is difficult to assess whether it has been correctly administered. Some slight changes to the administration records would ensure a better clarity to these key records. The school ensures that there is good provision for the care of sick boarders. The school has two rooms near the school surgery, each containing three beds solely for sick pupils. Each room has a television and there are bathrooms nearby. Ill pupils are checked on regularly and if the sick rooms are occupied at night, a member of staff sleeps nearby in the surgery. The boarders receive good quality food. Both the boarding houses eat meals together and mealtimes are pleasant, sociable occasions. Each day, boarders have a cooked breakfast as well as a choice of a cooked lunch, with a vegetarian option or a baked potato with fillings and a salad bar or a baguette and sandwich option. There is a choice of puddings with fresh fruit available. Supper also includes a hot choice with a salad bar. There are theme nights with the recent Halloween night proving popular with the boarders. All the boarders and staff, including the kitchen staff, dressed up in fancy dress. The boarders are positive about the quality and choice of food available. A recent development has been the introduction of a food committee whereby the pupils can offer suggestions and feedback regarding the food. There have also been opportunities for some overseas boarders to go into the kitchen and show the chef how to cook their national food. All the kitchen staff receive training in food handling and hygiene on a yearly basis. The kitchen had a visit from the local Environmental Health Service in September 2008 and there are no outstanding recommendations.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The school has an effective policy on countering bullying which is known and available to staff, parents and boarders. Boarders at the school do not identify bullying as a problem and clear action is taken if concerns are raised. The anti-bullying policy also includes cyberbullying and training on this issue has been provided to pupils and parents. The school has a written child protection policy which has been recently updated. However, it contains some out of date information and does not mention the role of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The headmistress is the designated person at the school in relation to child protection with the deputy head as the deputy designated person. Both have received appropriate training for this role. The school has good links with the local authority and are knowledgeable about who to contact if needed. All the school staff receive training in safeguarding every year. Refresher training took place in September 2008 with a longer session planned for later in the school year. Boarders feel safe at the school and have no concerns regarding privacy. There are good standards of behaviour among the boarders and few sanctions are used. All sanctions imposed

are recorded and the records are monitored by the deputy head. Any sanctions used are clear and boarders feel that the rules and punishments are generally fair, although there have been some changes made to the rules this term which some older boarders do not like. Regular boarders' meetings are taking place to resolve these issues. Good behaviour is promoted and there is a reward system in place. There are clear systems and procedures in place to deal with complaints. Feedback from parents and boarders is actively sought and is appropriately responded to. There are essentially sound staff recruitment procedures in place. CRB checks are routinely sought and two written references are received before starting employment at the school. Identity is checked as well as proof of relevant qualifications. The staff files have a checklist at the front of the file to ensure that the appropriate checks have been undertaken. The school is not ensuring that every new member of staff has a new CRB check carried out and returned before starting work at the school and there is no evidence that direct contact has been made with each referee to verify the written reference. Written records of the interview with the outcome are not currently contained in the recruitment file. These additions would improve existing practice. Health and safety matters are taken seriously by the school. Regular fire drills take place in boarding time and there are routine checks made of the fire safety equipment. All recommendations made at the last fire safety inspection in October 2007 have been addressed. Some sound security measures are in place, with each boarding house having a keypad entry system and better outside lighting has been installed. A security officer is employed and there is use of a closed circuit television camera. However, there are some exits within the boarding houses where additional security would be beneficial. Boarders are protected from safety hazards within the boarding houses. There are window restrictors in place, safety glass and annual testing of portable electrical appliances. Activities undertaken by boarders are risk assessed such as the bonfire party and trips to the cinema.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

The school has an extensive programme of extra-curriculum clubs and activities, both at lunchtime and after school which includes various sports, drama, music and crafts. The school has also increased the amount of activities for boarders at weekends which the younger boarders, in particular, enjoy. There are appropriate safeguards in place regarding internet usage and information has been provided to both parents and pupils about safety. The boarders receive high levels of personal support from staff. All the boarders can identify a number of staff at the school they can turn to for personal guidance or with a personal problem. One boarder commented 'you are always heard if you have a problem and the staff are always there for you.' The school is knowledgeable about pupils who have additional welfare needs and ensures that records are maintained of concerns. An external counsellor comes to the school once a week and the pupils can contact her directly regarding sessions and there is also a drop-in session. In addition, there is an independent listener available for pupils. Both the counsellor and the independent listener are well known to boarders. A student listening service was introduced in September 2008. A number of the sixth form students have received training in listening skills and are operating the service.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

The boarders' have opportunities to contribute their views. In addition to school council meetings, a food committee has been set up and there are regular meetings of the boarders'

council and whole boarding house meetings. The minutes of the meetings are displayed in the boarding houses with clear feedback about any issues raised. There have been changes made as a result of boarders' views including the introduction of brunch on Sunday, new DVD's and games bought and new magazines bought following a vote. Some boarders have been involved in producing the new information booklet for boarders. There are good arrangements in place whereby boarders' can maintain private contact with their parents and families. All the boarders have mobile phones and younger boarders hand them in at night. In addition, both the boarding houses have private payphones and/or telephones where parents can call back. There are some computers within the boarding houses and a larger information technology suite where boarders can send and receive e-mail. Letters are also written and received. Parents are positive about the staff contact with them and say that 'there is excellent communication between parents and boarding staff.' New boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation and are enabled to settle in. A new handbook has been written for boarders as well as a handbook for parents of boarders. It is a small boarding community and the boarders are encouraged to get to know each other and to offer each other support.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The boarding accommodation is well maintained and decorated and has a comfortable, homely feel. New carpets, settees, rugs and pictures have been bought for the junior common room as well as a new selection of DVD's and games. The younger boarders share a bedroom with no more than five others, those in the middle school share with one or two and the sixth form have their own study bedrooms. A number of new beds have been bought as well as new mattresses. All the boarders have a lockable drawer to keep personal possessions and valuables. The boarding houses have adequate toilet and washing facilities. Some upgrading work to bathrooms is currently being undertaken in the junior boarding house and the provision of the shower facilities for senior boarders is being reviewed.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

There have been some recent changes to the management of boarding within the school. A new head of boarding started in September 2008 as well as a new senior housemistress. Changes have been made to the role of the deputy head who oversees the pastoral care provided by the school. These changes have only been in place for seven weeks at the time of this inspection and it is evident that many positive changes have been made within this short time frame. The new staff have extensive experience of boarding in other schools and are enthusiastic in their roles. Some of the older boarders have found some changes difficult but these issues are being worked through with them. There is clear leadership of boarding and effective monitoring is taking place by both the deputy head and the headmistress. Both meet with the head of boarding on a weekly basis and offer support to the wider boarding team. The deputy head is involved in monitoring some of the key records maintained in the boarding houses such as the sanctions records. There are good supervision levels within the boarding houses at all times. There are two staff resident in each boarding house, together with the three gap students. The boarders say that they can always find a member of staff when they need one and that relationships with the boarding staff are good. All staff with boarding duties have job descriptions and receive induction training when newly appointed. There is regular review of their boarding practice and opportunities for continuing training in boarding. Boarding staff

have undertaken training in child protection, first aid, fire safety and the administration of homely remedies. More external courses are planned for the future. The staff boarding handbook has been revised and provides comprehensive information to new staff regarding the boarding philosophy, guidelines and procedures. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. It is a small boarding community and the boarders receive individual care from boarding staff who know them well. There are a number of boarders from overseas and they receive additional language support as well as help in settling in to the boarding community. International days are celebrated and more special culture events are planned.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Statutory requirements**

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### **Recommendations**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that written parental permission has been obtained for medical and emergency dental or optical treatment as well as for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medication to boarders (NMS 15)
- review the recording of prescribed medication to ensure that the records are clear and easy to monitor (NMS 15)
- review the child protection policy to ensure that it remains up to date (NMS 3)
- review the staff recruitment procedures to ensure that consistent recruitment practices are carried out and that the files provide clear evidence that all the required checks have been completed (NMS 38)
- review security within the boarding houses (NMS 41).