

# Kitebrook House

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspection date</b>	22 January 2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Barbara Davies
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<b>Registered person</b>	Cothill Educational Trust
<b>Head / Principal</b>	post vacant
<b>Nominated person</b>	Mr. Adrian Richardson
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	29 November 2006

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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**

Kitebrook House is a small independent school for girls aged eight to 13 years. It occupies a substantial country property, converted for educational use, near Moreton in the Marsh. The school was established by the former principal in 1955 in Somerset. It moved to its present location in 1959. The school was purchased by 'The Cothill Trust' in 2007. Limited weekly and flexible boarding is provided. The school is set in extensive grounds that are used for recreation and sporting activities. The school aims to: 'Look at each child's needs, and each child's potential, and to provide a secure and loving – yet challenging – background in which all the children can fully thrive and develop'.

### **Summary**

This was an announced key inspection and the first full welfare inspection of the school since 2003. All of the key standards were inspected together with recommendations made following a random visit conducted on 29 November 2006. The former founder, proprietor and headteacher was acting as headteacher during the period of this inspection. She had resumed duties when the headteacher who had replaced her during 2007 subsequently resigned her post at the end of the summer term 2008. A new headteacher has been appointed and is to commence employment at the beginning of the spring term.

Boarders are happy, well looked after and feel safe when they are at school. 'The Cothill Trust' and the new headteacher are fully aware of the school's deficits and have started to address them. Significant improvements have been made but there remain areas of the school's practice that do not fully conform to standards. It is not currently practice for parents and boarders to receive information about key policies and procedures, such as complaints and anti-bullying. The lack of recording in some areas of the school's practice, such as consulting with boarders and their families and maintenance checks completed on playground equipment, means it is not able to fully demonstrate the action it obviously takes to address issues that arise.

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 previous inspection The Cothill Trust has purchased Kitebrook School. The Trust has improved safety aspects of the school with the installation of a new fire alarm system and CCTV cameras. All staff have attended training in child protection, first aid and fire safety. The school does not currently have a designated person with responsibility for child protection but is intending to address this when the new headteacher commences employment. Policy and procedural guidance has been published in some key areas of practice but these are not routinely distributed to boarders and their families.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Hearty and nutritious meals provide boarders with a healthy diet although there is limited choice at meal time. The school does not consult formally with boarders over menu planning but keeps a watchful eye on what they like and do not like during meals. Boarders and teachers

express that they would like to see more variety in the meals served. Staff involved in preparing food have not received training in food safety despite previous recommendations. Whilst the school has taken some precautions by obtaining a copy of the guidance issued through the Food Standards Agency, these guidelines are not fully adhered to.

Biology lessons provide the forum for personal, social and health education to be delivered to pupils in an age appropriate manner. The school does not encounter issues with alcohol, smoking and illegal substance abuse amongst boarders and there is an unwritten policy that this behaviour would not be acceptable within the school.

Records held on boarders inform the school about their health requirements and inform the planning of services whilst they are on the school site. As most boarders spend limited periods of time at school, parents retain responsibility for most aspects of health care. Most boarders return home if unwell but the school provides appropriate sick-room facilities if required. All of the school's staff have completed first aid training to ensure that boarders have prompt access to medical intervention in an emergency.

A designated member of staff holds responsibility for attending to the medication needs of boarders and this ensures consistency of practice. A record is kept of all medication administered but separate records are not kept for prescribed and non-prescribed. Information recorded, particularly in relation to prescribed medication, does not always indicate the name, dose or reason for the medication being administered. Although not a significant shortfall due to the small numbers of medication administered, the current system does not facilitate a stock check.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The policies and practice adopted by the school protect boarders in relation to bullying, child protection and complaints. The school informs parents how they can obtain copies of the school's policies and procedures but does not routinely distribute them. This means that not all parents are fully informed about how the school operates. The Trust intends to publish the policies on its website, and that of the school, to make information more accessible to parents.

The ethos of the school encourages pupils to respect and care for each other. Boarders report bullying not to be an issue and this is also the perception of staff. The school is aware of the potential for bullying and has planned approaches for dealing with it should it occur.

External training for staff ensures they are equipped with the knowledge of how to deal with a child protection disclosure should one arise. The school does not currently have a designated child protection officer although plans to address this when the new headteacher commences employment. Staff understand the reporting procedures they are to follow in the interim.

The school operates a very simple but effective behaviour management policy. Boarders respond well to the incentives offered and are well behaved and polite. The school does not use physical restraint to manage behaviour. This is not evident within the behaviour management policy neither is there a description of the circumstances in which it may be necessary to take such measures.

Boarders do not receive written information informing them about how they can complain and are not familiar with this concept. Nevertheless, they confidently express that if 'upset, worried

or unhappy about anything then we talk to the teachers and they help us sort it out'. The school places an emphasis on people 'being happy with what we are providing'. It operates an open door policy and aims to address concerns informally and immediately. Parents have recourse to The Trust if dissatisfied with responses given by the school.

The school does not operate a prefect system or appoint educational guardians.

The school gives a priority to the safety of pupils within the school environment and whilst on school trips. Regular testing of fire alarms and fire equipment means that they remain in good working order in the event of the fire. The involvement of boarders in regular evacuation procedures familiarises them with the action to take in the event of a fire. Risk assessments completed in advance of school trips ensure that any risks posed to pupils are identified and any necessary action taken to make the activity safe.

Boarders are given privacy when getting changed and using bathroom facilities.

The Cothill Trust assumes responsibility for completing recruitment checks for all staff. Appropriate policies and procedures were described and seen to be in place although no new staff had been appointed since the previous inspection. Checks were still in the process of being completed for the new headteacher and her husband. The Trust is fully aware that employment at the school cannot commence until checks with the Criminal Records Bureau and written references have been received. All other checks, including telephone references were available, although the record of interview was reported to be with the Trustees who conducted the interview.

Recently installed CCTV cameras prevent people from gaining unauthorised access to boarders in the school and the boarding house.

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

The provision is good.

The school does not have an independent listener but says that it will consider this should the number and frequency of boarding increase. Nearly all boarders only board for one or two nights a week and have regular contact with their parents.

Although the school does not have a written anti-discriminatory policy, the school promotes respect and tolerance of other people and their beliefs. This is evident in the way that boarders relate to each other within the school environment. Staff are adamant that discrimination exhibited by pupils or staff would not be tolerated

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Group work with all pupils provides them with some opportunity to express their views about things they would like to see happen within the school. There are however a lack of formal systems for requesting and recording feedback about boarding and other aspects of the school's provision, such as food.

The school does not have phone that boarders can access without reference to staff. Whilst this does not conform to standards, the limited nature of boarding means that most boarders

have daily contact with their families. The Cothill Trust is aware of the need for boarders to have independent access to a telephone and intends to address this aspect of its provision.

The school shows sensitivity to the needs of new boarders. A support network, including a buddy system, helps new pupils become acquainted with the school's routines and expectations. Teachers inform boarders about the school's expectations by engaging them in conversation and discussion. There is currently no written information about the school available for boarders in a user friendly form.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The school does not provide lockable storage space in which boarders can secure their personal possessions. Given the limited nature of boarding and the trust that boarders have in each other, this is not currently a significant shortfall in the school's practice. There is an expressed intention by the Trust to provide lockable tuck boxes for boarders to secure personal items if they want to.

Boarding facilities are bright and cheerfully decorated. Recent re-decoration of dormitories together with the purchase of new bedroom furniture ensures that dormitories offer a pleasant environment and provide generous storage facilities. The most frequently used toilet and shower room provides facilities of a good standard. Shower cubicles are however transparent and this could compromise the privacy of boarders. All of the baths are in need of refurbishment or replacement and as a consequence boarders seldom choose to use them.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school operates an open door policy and welcomes parents into the school. Parents' familiarity with the school means that they are well acquainted with the school's ethos and practice. However the school does not routinely distribute written documentation, such as the statement of boarding principles, discipline and anti-bullying procedures, to parents. Not all parents will therefore be fully informed about the school's practice and do not necessarily know what courses of action are open to them if concerned about the school's practice, such as their right to invoke the school's complaints procedure. The Trust intends to publish these on the Trust and School websites to make the information accessible to parents.

The school is clear about the action that would be taken in the event of a crisis taking place that adversely affects the welfare of boarders and other pupils. This however is not currently translated into a written policy statement as standards expect. The Trust is aware of this shortfall and aims to publish such a document by March 2009.

The school regularly conducts checks of the premises, grounds and fire equipment to ensure that the school provides a safe environment for boarders. Although action is taken to address the matters noted as being in need of attention, risk assessments are not routinely updated to show this. Although regular maintenance checks ensure that the play equipment and swimming pool are safe for boarders to use. A record of tests is not currently held and the person with responsibility for completing the tests has not attended recent training in these matters.

Good staffing levels ensure that boarders are well supervised during extra curricular activities and whilst in the boarding house. Boarders know how to contact staff during the night should they need assistance.

Staff understand and fulfil their duties in boarding. Whilst staff have not received copies of job descriptions, these are outlined within the statement of boarding principles. Boarding staff are well-experienced but a lack of opportunity to attend external training courses in boarding means that they do not have the opportunity to develop further skills and become acquainted with current practice. Whilst practice within the school conforms to standards, written guidance is not available in all matters for staff to refer to. The school's practice in relation to equality and diversity is satisfactory.

## 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 a choice of food is available at mealtimes, including a vegetarian option (NMS 24)
- ensure that all staff, involved in the preparation of food, complete training in food safety (NMS 24)
- ensure that the designated person with responsibility for child protection attends inter-agency training and update the child protection policy to indicate the name of the new designated officer with responsibility for child protection (NMS 3)
- ensure that the record of interview is retained along with the other recruitment checks completed for staff (NMS 38)
- ensure that a boarding handbook is published and distributed to boarders to include summaries of key policy statements, including the statement of boarding principles, complaints, anti-bullying, child protection and behaviour management policies (NMS 1 and 21)
- ensure that baths are refurbished or replaced and that action is taken to make shower cubicles less transparent. Also that boarders have access to a lockable storage facility in which to secure their possessions (NMS 44 and NMS 20)
- ensure that written records are kept of the safety checks completed on all areas of the school premises, including the play equipment and swimming pool and ensure that the person with responsibility for completing the checks receives up to date training (NMS 23)
- audit the school's policy against appendix 1 on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and publish guidance not currently in place, such as anti-discriminatory practice and countering major risks to health. (NMS 34)



- ensure that staff have up to date job descriptions and have the opportunity to attend external training in boarding practices (NMS 34)