

Leweston School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Wendy Anderson / Thomas Webber
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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

Leweston School is a single sex, girls, Catholic Independent Secondary School which was founded by the Religious of Christian Instruction in 1891. The school welcomes girls of other denominations and faiths. The school offers boarding for girls aged eight to 18. At the time of inspection the school had 73 full time, 25 weekly and 13 flexi boarders and 225 five day pupils. Boarders are divided by age into three boarding houses, junior, middle and senior house. Girls aged eight to 13 are accommodated in junior house, ages 13 to 16 in middle house and aged 16 to 18 in senior house and the sixth form south wing.

The school is situated in 40 acres of beautiful Dorset parkland, three miles south of the historic abbey town of Sherborne. Close links are maintained with nearby schools in order to provide opportunities for the girls to be involved in joint schools recreational and cultural activities within a secure and structured environment. The school is also a valued part of the local community.

Summary

This was an announced full inspection of the school in parallel with the Independent Schools Inspectorate of the preparatory school. All the key standards were inspected. The school promotes the health and welfare of its boarders, safeguards its students, ensures that boarders have the opportunity to contribute to the operation of the school and show leadership in boarding provision. Of the five outcome areas being healthy and economic wellbeing are judged as good, enjoying and achieving and positive contribution are outstanding and staying safe and organisation are judged as satisfactory. Pastoral care and the staffs relationships with the young people are seen as particular strengths of this school.

The inspectors joined the students for breakfast, lunch and supper and had access to all boarding houses and to school grounds. They also had access to all policies and logs, student files and personnel records. Discussion groups were held with boarders as well as informal contact with boarders throughout the inspection. There were also staff discussion groups and individual interviews.

As part of the inspection process, boarders and parents were offered the opportunity to anonymously complete pre-inspection questionnaires. All boarders completed the questionnaire and four parental responses were received

Judgements contained in this report are made from evidence obtained from pre-inspection material, from that gathered during the inspection and from the views expressed by staff and boarders.

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 inspection there has been a new senior management team appointed. Staff and boarders said that this had had a positive impact on the school. At the last inspection there were 22 recommended actions made. Of these 22 only three remain outstanding. These relate to the information the school is required to keep on staff files and the need for staff to receive

formalised annual performance reviews. Further work is required on the complaint records to fully meet the Standards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The school has a comprehensive Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme. Boarders find these lessons interesting and relevant as they are adapted to include topics of interest and current events. Staff demonstrated a good knowledge of the school's policies and procedures for dealing with any incidents of smoking, drinking alcohol or illegal substance abuse. The school nurses are also involved in the PSHE lessons. If the school had a concern about a boarder taking drugs, a drug test would be arranged with the local GP.

The school has a well equipped health centre, which is comfortably furnished and staffed by two qualified nurses who ensure one of them is on duty during the times the centre is open. A number of the staff team have first aid qualifications. Although the health centre is only open 08.00 to 18.00 one of the nurses would stay overnight if a boarder needed to stay in the health centre. Within the boarding provision there is also a designated room for the care of ill boarders. All rooms for the care of ill boarders have appropriate call systems in place.

Boarders' files contain appropriate health information including consent forms for first aid and administration of medication. There was not a single comprehensive record on boarders' files of all medication dispensed to them. However the current system does ensure that there are no incidents of incorrect administration of medicines. Communication between the staff in the medical centre and the boarding houses is good. All medication is stored appropriately. Any medication brought to the school by boarders is checked by the local GP before being administered.

Where appropriate there are detailed welfare plans in place for boarders. The management of health and personal problems is done with sensitivity and care. Where appropriate, links are made with external agencies to provide support for boarders. Staff know the boarders very well and can identify if they are undergoing times of stress, home sickness and will ensure they receive the appropriate support. Older boarders are able to be responsible for the administration of their own medication. In such cases a risk assessment is carried out by the nurses.

The local GP visits the school twice a week and boarders can attend the surgery outside of these hours. Boarders' have the choice of either a female or male GP at the local surgery. Boarders' can access a local dentist or see their existing dentist. The school does not have a school counsellor. Counselling services can be accessed via the GP. Referrals can be made by the boarders' families, staff at the school health centre, house/school staff or the boarders themselves.

Pupils are provided with a varied menu with a choice of meals which include catering to boarders' dietary requirements. Boarders are happy with the range of foods provided with the exception of suppers, which they feel is of a lower standard than the other meals. Boarders have input to the menus via the school council and the school was in the process of developing a specific food council. The catering staff receive the appropriate level of training. The most recent environmental health report stated that the facilities and food handling procedure were exceptional. The dining areas are pleasantly furnished and decorated. The school operates a cafeteria style of service, with those pupils attending the nursery receiving a 'family service'.

Boarders have access to drinking water and snacks outside of mealtimes. There is a school shop which provides a variety of healthy snacks which are reasonably priced. Any profit from the tuck shop goes to charity.

The laundry service at the school is good with laundry being returned the next day and it is very rare for items to go missing. Any soiled laundry is laundered separately. Older boarders have access to washers and dryers in their boarding houses.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

There is an effective policy and procedure for countering bullying. Boarders did not feel bullying was an issue at the school, including boarders from different backgrounds or religious beliefs. If it did happen then they would tell staff and it would be 'sorted out' quickly. Information on the school's stance on bullying is detailed in the documentation sent to parents and in the boarder's information.

There are appropriate policies and procedures in place on child protection and responding to allegations, which are followed in practice. All non academic staff are provided with a credit card size laminate which details in bullet points what action staff must take if a disclosure is made to them or they witness anything inappropriate. The school is in the process of providing these laminated cards to academic staff as well. There has been recent training on child protection which was provided by Dorset Safeguarding Board. This training did not include the security guards at the school although they demonstrated a good working knowledge of the child protection policies and procedures. The training currently provided for prefects does not include appropriate information on child protection. However prefects were clear if they had any concerns they would report these to a member of staff. The school has an appropriate policy and procedure in place for dealing with missing persons.

There is a fair and appropriate policy on behaviour management. This information is contained within young people's and parental handbooks as well as the staff handbook. Boarders feel that sanctions used are fair and there was no evidence of idiosyncratic punishments. Whilst the school maintains a record of sanctions this record did not always include the name of the member of staff recording the sanction or that of the person who monitors the sanctions log.

The school does not use any form of restraint.

There is an appropriate complaints policy. Information on how to make a complaint is detailed within the boarders and parental information and also on notice boards in each of the boarding houses and additional notice boards around the school. The school has two designated members of staff who deal with any worries or concerns young people may have. Their contact numbers are also on the school's notice boards and by the public phones. Boarders have a wide range of people within school who they would go to if they wanted to make a complaint or had any concerns. They feel that any complaint made would be taken seriously by staff and investigated. Parents agreed with this statement. Whilst in general the practice in this area is good the complaints log does not consistently record the actions taken and whether the complainant was satisfied with the outcome.

Prefects are voted in by staff and boarders. There is also a prefect specifically for overseas boarders. The prefects undergo training before taking up their role. The school arranges for

the prefects and staff to go on a bonding weekend before prefects take on their duties and prefects subsequently have regular meetings with a designated member of staff. Prefects feel well supported by staff and enjoyed their role within the school. Boarders spoke very positively about the school prefects. The head girl and her deputy attend the Head of Schools annual conference.

The school maintains the appropriate records on fire issues. Staff receive training on fire related issues which is regularly updated. Boarders were clear on what they had to do when the fire alarms were sounded. There are frequent fire drills and these happen at different times of the day and night. Some secondary fire escapes in the dormitories had chairs and chests of drawers blocking or partially blocking these fire exits. These were moved during the inspection. During the last inspection carried out by the local fire brigade there were no issues identified.

The school has thorough risk assessments for all the required areas and events. There was a lack of consistent evidence of these being signed off or monitored by a senior member of staff.

Boarders felt that their privacy was respected by staff.

Twenty staff files were inspected, some of which did not contain all the required information required under the National Minimum Standards. The school said that they had been following the guidance on recruitment provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Family Services (DfCS). However three of the staff files did not conform to this guidance. This included the files of the gap students. The school was able to provide evidence to confirm that a system had been put in place for the new gap student due to start at the school in January 2009. This system is satisfactory. The school also took immediate action where gaps were identified. The school has an appropriate procedure for contractors working on the school site and all visitors are required to sign in and out of the visitor's book and are provided with a visitor's badge.

There are appropriate systems in place for the security of boarders accommodation. Boarders said that they felt safe at the school.

The school has a health and safety committee and a member of the governing body has specific responsibility for health and safety. Staff are provided with up to date information on substances they may use. Several window restrictors needed adjustment, this was done during the inspection. On the school notice boards there is additional information on health and safety issues such as the notice that was in place warning boarders to be careful of slipping on wet leaves.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is a very wide range of activities and clubs at school. Boarders said that there is always something to do and that they are able to try new things. They are able to put forward ideas for activities and trips which the staff would try where possible to action. Boarders have appropriate access to the internet. The school has an excellent system to protect those using the internet, including triggers to alert staff to any internet bullying. Boarders feel they have adequate free time to relax.

Boarders said that they had an extensive number of staff who they could turn to for guidance or with personal problems, in particular the deputy head, the director of boarding and the chaplain. All boarders also knew how to contact the school's independent listener, whose

number is widely available throughout the school. Boarders said that the relationships they had with their allocated tutors were very important to them. Tutors have regular coffee mornings with their tutees.

The school has an excellent system for the induction of overseas boarders which really helps them to settle in. There is a specific overseas prefect appointed. The school provides English as a Foreign Language (EFL) support and the staff team as a whole have INSET days on EFL to raise awareness of different cultures and learning styles. The school has an annual international night and overseas students cook foods from their home countries in the cookery club. There is a policy of overseas student speaking English in public places to encourage language and social integration. A number of the staff team speak Spanish and one is learning Mandarin. Overseas boarders enjoy being at the school and are made to feel very welcome and part of the school.

Boarders did not feel there were any onerous demands placed upon them. Staff said that they were very vigilant with the pupils so that any signs of stress due to over work or over commitment are spotted quickly and addressed especially around exam times. This process is enhanced by the staff's through knowledge and strong relationships with the young people.

The boarders have a variety of study provision. All of the study areas are well lit, furnished and ventilated. Boarders access the library and other parts of the school outside of the 'school' day.

Boarders have a range of recreational areas. Each boarding house has a common room which is comfortably furnished. Any access to staff accommodation is properly supervised and there is no evidence of any favouritism or inappropriate one to one contact between staff and boarders. The school is set in beautiful extensive grounds to which the boarders have access. Boarders said that the school was a lovely environment to live in.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have a wide range of opportunities to contribute their views on the operation of the boarding provision. These include the school council, environmental council, boarders' council and the school are forming a food council. These forums are very effective and pupils provided a number of examples of where things had changed using these forums.

Boarders are enabled to maintain contact with their families and friends. Parents are encouraged to visit the school. Throughout the school there are public phones which provide privacy in which to make calls. The majority of boarders have mobile phones. The school has a rule that the younger boarders must hand their phones in at night. Boarders are informed prior to starting at the school of the poor phone reception of some phone providers and the school provides advice on which phone provider gives the best coverage. Boarders have access to email.

There is an extensive and comprehensive induction process for new boarders, including 'taster' days with overnight stays. Boarders are provided with a welcome pack which includes stationary, a Leweston DVD and chocolate. A 'Guardian Angel' is appointed to each new girl to act as a mentor. These arrangements are reviewed annually with input from the last intake of young people and suggestions from the boarders are incorporated to improve the system. Boarders felt the level of support given to them by staff and existing pupils was excellent. There are a

variety of handbooks for boarders including ones on each boarding house. There are also a range of activities provided to welcome new girls and help them mix and bond. These include Roman Day, a fashion show where older girls design clothes and the young girls model and various sporting events.

Boarders have age appropriate access to the local facilities.

The relationships between the boarders and the staff are a major strength of the school. Boarders were extremely positive about the staff saying they were very well looked after, staff cared about them, staff always took time to listen to them and they were fun to be with. This was evidenced during the inspection.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Each boarder has a lockable storage. Boarders' pocket monies are appropriately stored and records kept. Boarders' passports are securely stored.

Boarding accommodation is of a good standard, comfortable, clean, airy and generally well-decorated. There is a rolling programme for refurbishment and boarders are aware of and have input to this programme. There are sufficient common rooms and kitchens for number and age-range of boarders. Maintenance is dealt with quickly and boarders as well as staff can write in the maintenance book.

There is a variety of sleeping accommodation ranging from single rooms to dormitories. Houses are arranged by age/year. Boarders are able to personalise their rooms with posters, photographs and toys. Each room provides adequate storage for the number of boarders accommodated there.

There is an adequate number of toilet and bathing facilities in each boarding house. The school is in the process of refurbishing the remaining bathing and toilet facilities. Staff do not share the boarders' facilities.

Boarders are provided with suitable changing facilities during the day.

The school shop is well stocked with the necessary personal and stationery items at competitive prices.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school has a suitable statement of boarding principles and practice. The school provides handbooks for pupils and their parents. There is also a DVD about life at the school, which the boarders thought was very good.

There is a clear management and leadership structure within the school. The senior management team has had two new additions with the deputy head and the director of boarding. Staff commented that the management team has significantly improved over the last two years, that they are very supportive and always available, good communicators and open to ideas and suggestions for improvement. Senior boarding staff are experienced and well trained. The governing body have designated governors for child protection, boarding and health and safety.

The school has an appropriate crisis management policy which covers foreseeable events. This was seen in operation during the inspection.

The boarding houses are well organised and contribute to the boarders' welfare.

There is a lack of consistency in the monitoring of the school's records and risk assessments by a senior member of staff.

Boarders are adequately and age appropriately supervised by staff. There is a clear staff rota and boarders know who is on duty and when. Boarders have no difficulty in contacting staff when they need them. The school does not use any agency staff, all staff sickness is covered within the staff team. Staff cover at weekends is also appropriate. Boarders did not identify any time when there was 'thin' staff cover. The supervision of boarders leaving the school site is in line with the guidance from the DfCS. The medical centre provides information for staff to take on trips which lists the medical condition/needs of all the pupils on the trip. Gap students are not left in sole charge of students.

All the staff files inspected contained job descriptions and evidence of the school's comprehensive induction programme for all new staff. Staff are well supported by the director of boarding and other members of the boarding team both informally and through regular pastoral meetings. There is informal appraisal of new boarding staff by the Head in the first term. A Boarding Schools Association qualification being undertaken by the new housemistress. Staff report the school is very supportive of on-going training and that a good budget is available for this in areas appropriate to their post. Annual INSET training for staff updates child protection, health and safety. A recent INSET training was done on internet safety, the previous term this was also open for the parents. Evidence that staff, including support staff, receive supervision at the required intervals and annual performance reviews was inconsistent. The school has developed new proforma for both staff supervision and performance reviews which were being implemented at the time of inspection.

All staff have access to the boarding school handbooks, which include major policies, rotas, routines, information on pupil welfare and general running of the houses, as well as educational goals for a boarding house and the boarding development plan is included. A comprehensive domestic policy manual is available for domestic staff which includes child Protection, health and safety and cleaning protocols (for example infectious diseases.)

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school is committed to ensuring equality and diversity are woven through out the work undertaken with the boarders. Boarders are provided with the individual support they require to meet their individual needs. Staff have excellent knowledge of the boarders they are working with and ensure the boarders receive consistency of care.

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 there is a single comprehensive record of medication dispensed to individual boarders. NMS 7
- ensure the quality of suppers at the school are improved. NMS 24
- ensure the security guards and prefects receive an appropriate level of child protection training. NMS 3
- ensure sanction logs are signed by staff when making an entry or monitoring the log. NMS4
- ensure the complaint records contain outcomes of any complaints and a comprehensive record of the investigation. NMS 5
- ensure all fire exits are kept clear at all times. NMS 26
- ensure staff records contain all the information required under Standard 38.2. Files on GAP students must contain the information as required by Standard 38.4. Files on adults who live at the school but not employed by the school must contain the information as required by Standard 38.3 and 39.4.
- ensure school records as detailed under Standard 23 are monitored by a senior member of staff and show evidence of this monitoring. NMS 23
- ensure all staff receive supervision and performance review as under Standard 34.