

Old Rectory School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Lindsey Blickem
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Date of last inspection	9 March 2009

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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 opened in 1981 to respond directly to the needs of children with dyslexia. The school caters for 32 full and part time boarders of pre-preparatory and preparatory school age. There are two boarding houses located on the school grounds. Boarders spend most of their time in the Main House where the dining room, hall and library are located. The Coach House contains dormitories, a dining room and a music and drama room. The school is set in grounds which provide boarders with outdoor sports facilities. It is situated in a rural area and there are a few local facilities within walking distance of the school.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection. All key national minimum standards for the welfare of boarders were inspected. In addition, boarders' health records, organisation and management, care of ill boarders and activities and free time were also inspected. The progress made in meeting recommendations raised at the previous inspection in March 2009 were also monitored.

The overall rating is good. Being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, achieving economic well-being and organisation are all rated good.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The headteacher was asked to make improvements to: the supervision of boarders; the policy in relation to children who are missing from school; fire precautions and procedures; the disciplinary policy; staff training in child protection; the recruitment and vetting of staff; restricting access to the school; the child protection policy; and anti bullying policy. Improvements have been made in all areas relating to staying safe ensuring that children are protected from harm.

The headteacher was asked to make improvements to: the personal, social and health education; to access to health records; training for staff preparing food, the quality of meals, first aid arrangements; and parental permissions in relation to the treatment of young people. Improvements have been made in all these areas ensuring that children's health needs are promoted and supported.

Improvements have also been made to: the monitoring of welfare provision; consultation with boarders; the induction of new staff; training and staff support; and the organisation of dormitories. These improvements ensure that the management of boarding effectively contributes to the welfare of young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's health needs are well met. The system for administering medication is efficient and safe, records are well maintained and include details of the dose, date and time given. All entries are signed by a staff member. Medicines are stored in a locked cupboard which is only

accessible to staff. The system for administering medication is consistent across both boarding houses and the matron and housemistress are responsible for ensuring the system is safely and consistently maintained.

Individual health records for children are well-maintained and include relevant information relating to their medical history as well as any current health related issues. Health records include written parental permissions in relation to the administering medication and obtaining emergency medical treatment. This ensures young people will receive medical treatment when they need it and with the consent of parents. There is first aid cover at all times within the school, and there is a first aid rota which is located on the medical room door clearly stating which member of staff is on first aid duty. There are a sufficient number of first aid qualified staff which ensures cover at all times with a number of staff in and around the school who can provide first aid back up.

Young people are provided with a varied and substantial diet which is well balanced. Mealtimes are always in the dining room and are sociable and well organised. Young people are able to choose one of two dishes at lunchtime with a salad option. Breakfast includes a choice of toast, cereal, yogurts and fresh fruit. Young people have access to fresh fruit at most times during the day and are encouraged to eat a piece of fruit during their break times. Young people clearly enjoy the food they are provided with. All staff responsible for the preparation of food have received training in food hygiene.

The school's personal, social and health education programme now includes age appropriate advice and guidance on sex education.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are protected from bullying and enjoy a harmonious and calm environment. Young people know how to report any issues or behaviour that concerns or upsets them and these are dealt with quickly and robustly by the headteacher and staff. There are positive relationships between young people, and the recent separation of boarders in relation to age group has created more appropriate peer groups within dormitories. Overall young people report feeling happy and well-supported whilst in school.

Practice in relation to dealing with safeguarding issues has improved significantly since the last inspection. The headteacher has developed a better working relationship with the local authority and appropriately refers or discusses safeguarding issues with the Local Authority Safeguarding Officer. Staff are clear about how to manage and deal with issues of concerns, including how to deal with concerns raised by young people. The child protection policy is consistent with practice and is appropriately robust ensuring that issues of concern are raised with the headteacher who in turn refers to the local authority if necessary. There is a designated child protection officer on-site all times and all staff have recently received child protection training from the headteacher. Both child protection officers and the matron have received safeguarding training from the local authority. The child protection procedures ensures young people are kept safe and that issues of concern are appropriately dealt with.

Young people are very clear about the use of discipline within the school, which is fair and proportionate. There is an escalating tariff of disciplinary measures which begins with an informal discussion when a young person behaves inappropriately. Consistently poor behaviour or a

significant incident is dealt with formally. Bullying behaviour is considered a significant incident. Young people are also encouraged to contribute to their own environment by ensuring their bedrooms are tidy and prefects are required to perform certain domestic tasks which includes assisting with mealtimes. Reward systems are in place for young people who contribute consistently well.

Young people are protected from the risk of fire through regular testing of fire alarms and emergency lighting. There are also regular fire drills and young people are fully aware of the evacuation procedures. Fire risk assessments have been completed for the entire school and have identified some further work to be carried out. Action has been taken, where reasonably practical to do so, to ensure the environment is safe in relation to the risk of fire.

Privacy is generally good and young people are able to wash and change without fear of inappropriate intrusion by staff or other young people. A delicate balance is struck between the need for young people to be supervised whilst getting ready for school with their need for privacy. Generally this works well, although there are times when young people require closer monitoring by staff due to poor behaviour. Overall, however, privacy is protected.

Both the headteacher and proprietor have attended training in safer recruitment and recently employed staff members have undergone a more rigorous recruitment and vetting process which includes obtaining two written references, a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check prior to starting working and proof of identification. Vetting of volunteers or sessional staff is also appropriately robust. The school is now contacting referees directly to authenticate references and overall the vetting and recruitment process is good and ensures staff are appropriately vetted prior to working with children.

The school site is generally secure and free from public intrusion. The footpath running through the school grounds does allow access to the public although not through the main school buildings. The proprietor is in the process of trying to divert the path away from the school grounds although the local authority is reluctant to do so. The policy in place in relation to monitoring access to the school grounds ensures that staff remain vigilant to ensure that young people do not come into direct contact with members of the public.

The school grounds are generally free from identifiable hazards and where there are potential hazards appropriate action has been taken to secure the young people's safety. The two ponds are fenced off and have inflatable rings located around the site in the event of an emergency. Machinery and potentially dangerous equipment are kept locked away and the general tidiness and cleanliness ensures young people are kept safe.

The system for managing situations where a child is missing from school is efficient and effective. Incidents are dealt with promptly and robustly and are reported to the police in good time. There is effective monitoring of young people within the school which ensures that unauthorised absences are noticed quickly and responded to promptly.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy regular, structured and varied activities on a daily basis. After school clubs are compulsory for all children who board and the school ensures that all young people have the opportunity to participate in all the activities available throughout the academic year. After

supper young people are able to choose what activity they participate in or they can choose to spend time in their dormitories relaxing or in the library reading. The range of activities available to young people is very good and includes the opportunity to become a member of the 'fire crew' where they receive training from professional fire fighters. Young people are, therefore, encouraged to enjoy themselves, as well as being constructively occupied.

Young people describe the school and staff as very supportive. Support on a day-to-day basis is accessible at all times and the headteacher is available at most times during the day. Young people report that they can take any personal issues they may have to staff or the headteacher confident that they will be dealt with appropriately. During the evenings there are at least four members of staff on duty or available to young people if they have a concern or require adult support. A number of young people could recall times in which they needed help or someone to talk to and felt that they were listened to and had their issues resolved.

Young people do not experience inappropriate discrimination whilst in school. The individual needs of young people are well-known to staff who are able to respond appropriately to them. The boarding environment appropriately discriminates in relation to age and ensures that peer groups live together and that older children are not sharing dormitories with much younger children. No issues were raised by young people in relation to discrimination and they enjoy having their individual needs met whilst living in a relaxed and transparent culture.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The school has recently introduced a weekly boarders' meeting in which young people are able to raise issues or make suggestions about how boarding can be improved. Additionally young people report being able to raise issues or make suggestions on a day-to-day basis which are taken seriously by the headteacher and staff and are implemented if appropriate to do so. Young people feel listened to and taken seriously and a good balance is struck between the needs of the individual with the needs of the larger group.

Young people are able to contact parents at reasonable times during the day and evenings. The practical arrangements for making a telephone call do not include having access to a phone without reference to a staff member, however, staff are under clear instructions to allow young people access to the telephone without being required to provide details of the call they wish to make. Young people who have mobile phones are allowed to use them at specific times during each evening and are otherwise held by staff and kept securely in the office. Young people report being able to call home when they want to and that they receive calls from their parents without any difficulties.

Young people who are new to boarding settle in very well and are given all relevant information they need to allow them to feel settled and comfortable. Parents and young people attend an induction day prior to the start of term which provides them with information about the day-to-day practical arrangements relating to boarding whilst also providing the opportunity to ask questions. The written information provided to parents and young people is generally good and covers all significant aspects in relation to boarding. Young people receive support from parents or staff in going through the written information to ensure they understand what they can expect whilst being a boarder and what expectations are placed on them.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are required to hand in personal possessions to staff for safekeeping, including mobile phones, ipods/MP3 players and games consoles. These are stored securely in the office and are distributed to young people at set times during the evenings. Young people do not have individual lockable storage facilities within their dorms supplied by the school and there is a risk that personal items could go missing as a result.

Young people enjoy a good standard of accommodation, which is clean, tidy and well maintained. The boarding houses are attractive, reasonably spacious and well furnished. The décor throughout both boarding houses is attractive and maintained to a good standard. There is reasonable separation between boarding and the day school although many of the facilities available to boarders are part of the day school and after the school day has finished the school becomes the boarder's home and has a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. There is appropriate separation of boarders in relation to age groups and gender with the Coach House accommodating younger boarders and girls. The Main House accommodates older boarders. All young people have their own beds and a reasonable amount of personal space within each dormitory. Boarders have easy access to the school grounds during the evenings and the whole school has a feel of a very large family house with attractive grounds for the children to enjoy.

The Main house has sufficient washing and toilet facilities which are reasonably private relative to communal living. Coach House also has sufficient toilet and washing facilities and there are separate bathrooms for boys and girls. There are sufficient numbers of washing and toilet facilities in relation to the number of young people boarding ensuring good access and privacy.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a suitable statement of the school's principles and practice made available to parents, boarders and staff. The boarder's handbook is a shortened and more child friendly version of the school's statement of principles and practice and provides detailed information about the school and boarding. Parents are encouraged to go through with their child the written information about the school prior to them starting. Staff have access to all written information about the school including relevant policies and procedures in relation to boarding and welfare.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for boarding with delegated responsibilities to resident staff including the matron and housemistress. The organisation of boarding effectively contributes to the welfare of boarders particularly given that the vast majority of children who attend the school are boarders. The school day is well-organised, as are the evenings providing clear structure and good organisation. The separation of boarders in terms of age and gender is appropriate and also contributes to their welfare given that older boys are not sharing dormitories with much younger boys.

Risk assessments and record keeping within the school are good and ensure that issues or incidents are well documented enabling the headteacher to review young people's welfare and progress. Issues of concern or meetings held with young people and/or parents are recorded and held in a main file for future reference. Records are accessible to staff who require access and record keeping is generally of a good standard throughout the school providing evidence

of an efficient and effectively run service. The headteacher ensures all records are monitored regularly.

Young people are appropriately supervised at all times. There are at least four members of staff on duty during the evenings with the resident teacher on-site and the headteacher on call at all times. The overnight arrangements are clear and young people can summon assistance easily if required. Duty rotas clearly state who is responsible for the young people at any one time ensuring that they are safely cared for.

The induction of new staff is thorough and all new staff are required to complete an induction programme which ensures they are fully informed about policy and practice whilst also receiving on going support from senior members of staff. Access to training for boarding staff is good and there is evidence of an ongoing commitment to training with key members of boarding staff undertaking specific boarding related training in the near future. Key members of staff have received safeguarding training with the local authority and first aid training. Staff responsible for preparing food have received food hygiene training and all staff have been given in house safeguarding training. There are clear guidelines in place for staff with boarding responsibilities including a staff handbook, these guidelines are consistent with practice. Overall staff are given good support and have access to ongoing training relevant to their role and which contributes to the welfare of young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people's specific needs are well met and there are opportunities to learn about other cultures through the school curriculum.

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 each boarder has a suitably secure, accessible place to keep personal possessions and valuables (NMS 20.3)