

Gordon's School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Paul Taylor
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Date of last inspection	24 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

Gordon's school is a voluntary aided co educational state school which offers boarding and day places to the pupils. The school was founded in 1885 by public subscription, at the express wish of Queen Victoria, as a memorial to General Gordon who had been killed at Khartoum. The school was originally a boys home and then became a boarding school. Boarding is offered in four houses, each supervised by house parents who are supported by tutors and gap students.

Summary

At this announced inspection all the key standards were assessed. The school provides an outstanding level of care for the pupils who board there. Each boarder's individuality is valued and respected and the ethos in the school ensures that those who board there are cared for, and develop both academically and socially. The strong leadership of the school ensures that all the pupils have their welfare promoted and protected by robust and detailed systems which are underpinned by a committed group of staff. Pupils have numerous adults to whom they can approach for support and the embedded culture of the school ensures that pupils will also look out for one another. Pupils have a strong sense of loyalty and commitment to their peers and school. Boarders live in well maintained accommodation of an excellent standard. They benefit from a wide range of activities which encourage their development and skills, whether these are academic or practical. The boarding in the school is relaxed, open and homely and there is an emphasis placed on respecting each other and showing courtesy and manners to everyone.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection of the boarding aspect of the school by Ofsted.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school offers excellent guidance on the promotion of healthy living and lifestyles. Other health issues are discussed in personal, social, citizenship and health education within the school day and the pupils can approach members of staff to discuss any personal issues or problems. Appropriate information is provided to the pupils on issues such as illegal substances, sexual health, and other social issues. This information is shared sensitively and commensurate with their development and understanding.

Thorough health records are developed for the boarders. These contain information such as health histories, allergies and specific health needs, vaccination records as well as any issues which may affect a boarder's emotional wellbeing such as bereavement or divorce. Specific health plans are kept for boarders who have identified health needs such as enuresis or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Sensitive information is shared with members of staff on a 'need to know' basis and all records are kept securely stored.

There are clear policies and guidance with regards to the monitoring and promoting of the boarders health. Staff within the boarding houses are trained in first aid and the administration

of medication. The policies are reviewed and overseen by the very experienced registered school nurse. The administration and storage of medication is closely and robustly audited and monitored. Records are thorough and up to date. Clear records are kept of medication coming to the school and a stock take is maintained to ensure that all the records tally. Medication is kept securely stored. Written consent is in place for each pupil with regards to administration of first aid and medical treatment.

Boarders have access to a doctor who comes to the school every week. Additionally, appointments with either gender of doctor can be arranged if that is what the boarder wants. Other health appointments are also in place if they are needed, these include opticians, dentists or other specialist input, such as counselling or psychological input. The medical staff provide caring and sensitive attention to pupils who present themselves at the centre. They are very aware that some pupils may at times require reassurance and a kind word rather than medical attention. Support offered to them is nurturing and attentive. The school nurse notifies parents or guardians of any illnesses or injuries and clear records are kept of any accidents. The medical centre has two ward rooms and a isolation room which have on call buttons.

The standard of catering in the school is outstanding. The catering for the school is managed by a company which employs the staff to work in the school. The kitchen is well managed and the kitchen manager ensures that all the staff are trained appropriately in their roles. The kitchen is clean and hygienic and a visit by the Environmental Health Officer has graded the premises as 'excellent'. The menu is prepared on a three weekly basis and offers three choices on each main meal including a vegetarian option. Feedback from the boarders stated that the food is of a very good standard. Additionally, the catering staff are very aware of specific dietary needs for any particular children and ensure that these are met. Mealtimes are well ordered and pleasant social occasions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Within the school there are always adults around to support the pupils and to address any incidents or issues. The school has a clear policy and guidance in place with regards to managing bullying. The school has a anti bullying committee which is a mix of staff and pupils who look at ways in which to combat any bullying. Boarders do not feel there are bullying problems at the school. All pupils are encouraged to live as part of a close community and to look out for each other. The school approach ensures that there is an embedded culture in which bullying is regarded as unacceptable.

The school has members of staff who are responsible for the monitoring of child protection. One of the deputy head teachers is the co-ordinator on this issue. Child protection training is disseminated to all members of staff and the senior pupils. There is a child protection policy in place for the staff to follow and this contains clear guidance with regards to reporting issues of concern and how to respond to disclosures by children. The policy includes full information of reporting protocols used in the school including those used to speak with the local authorities. All members of staff and gap students have child protection training as part of their induction and the child protection co-ordinator ensures that all members of staff receive refresher training and reminders about their role and obligations every term. This training includes all adults who work in the school, including maintenance staff, catering staff and domestic staff. The members of staff who lead on child protection have external training every year. All members of staff

have access to the local child protection and safeguarding procedures. The level of awareness about child protection issues and the adults' responsibility to keep the pupils safe ensures that there is an excellent commitment to promote pupils welfare and safety.

Pupils are very clear as to what behaviour is expected from them. Sanctions used at the school are outlined in the behaviour management policy. Disciplinary measures are seen as an opportunity for students to discuss and address their behaviour rather than being seen as a punishment. All sanctions are recorded in the daily record and in a designated record if the sanction is of a more serious nature. The school celebrates achievements and good behaviour and rewards the students with privileges. Behaviour is observed to be very good with pupils showing civility and respect for each other as well as to visitors and members of staff.

Pupils have numerous opportunities to voice their opinions and complaints. It is clear that most of them are confident to express their views both in writing and verbally. This means that any complaints or issues can be passed on to various members of staff, including the heads of house and the headteacher. Complaints and comments are responded to and feedback from pupils confirms that their views are taken seriously and acknowledged. Complaints from parents are seen to be dealt with appropriately.

Pupils and staff alike are protected from risks to their safety and wellbeing. A robust and comprehensive programme of risk assessment identifies and addresses any known or perceived dangers. Such risk assessments are regularly reviewed and when necessary, amended. The students know which areas of the school are out of bounds. Security is maintained by having a night time security guard, closed circuit cameras and coded locks to boarding houses.

Trips away from the school site are the subject of robust and individualised risk assessments. These risk assessments are not only completed by the member of staff responsible for the trip or activity but are checked and endorsed by the senior member of staff responsible for the organised trips. The school has implemented other initiatives around travel and road safety for the students.

Records confirm that frequent testing of fire equipment and alarms is carried out and that fire drills occur regularly in both daylight and at night. An inspection of the premises was carried out by the fire brigade in 2008 and this found all the systems in place for fire safety to be satisfactory.

Students living in the school have their privacy respected. They are able to shower, wash and change privately. Staff supervision is discrete, ensuring that the younger students have easy access to assistance and guidance if needed, but not impinging on older pupils.

The school operates a rigorous and robust recruitment process which ensures that all adults working in the school in whatever role, are subject to references and Criminal Records Bureau checks. The bursar oversees the compilation of detailed and thorough staff records and telephones referees to ensure their veracity.

There are clear guidelines and expectations for visitors to follow. All visitors must wear a visitor's badge when on the premises and sign the visitors' book. Additionally, they are supervised and escorted when on the premises.

Systems in place to protect pupils are detailed, rigorous and subject to regular scrutiny and review.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are encouraged and supported to take part in diverse activities as part of their development and growth. Pupil's individual talents are acknowledged and celebrated and great importance is placed on opportunities for them to develop their interests. There is a strong belief in the school that there is something at which each pupil can enjoy and excel, whether this is academically, in sport, drama, music or hobbies.

The level of support available to the boarders is exceptional. Boarders have a large choice of individuals within the school who are available to them for guidance or support. This is supplemented by boarders also having external visitors and professionals, such as counsellors, if they feel that they need to speak to someone who does not work at the school. The high level of availability and accessibility of the staff means that support, advice and reassurance are readily available. Boarders report that 'there is always someone to talk to'. The staff awareness of each individual boarder means that they can receive support if they are struggling with any issues, whether these are related to school, such as struggling academically or home related.

The individuality and different backgrounds of boarders are valued and celebrated. There are boarders with different cultural and religious backgrounds. Pupils who have English as an additional language can access advice and guidance from an external multi ethnic service. The differences of backgrounds of both boarders and members of staff are seen as an opportunity to learn from each other and to develop understanding and tolerance. Difference in dietary needs for health, cultural and religious reasons are well catered for and understood. There is a chapel on site as well as a multi faith prayer room. Issues of equality are addressed within the school in mixed activities and sports events and the school curriculum educates pupils about issues such as discrimination and difference.

The support offered to the pupils and opportunities that they have at the school, are of an outstanding quality.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders can voice their opinions and feelings about how they are being cared for in a number of different committees. They value the system operated in the school as they have managed to influence changes in décor, activities and improvement in the quality of food. Boarders feel listened to and they feel their opinions are respected.

Boarders are also able to approach a number of individuals about any issues in less formal settings, such as informal chats with housemasters, tutors, teachers and the headteacher.

Boarders are able to contact parents and loved ones via their own mobile telephones, by using the school's landline and by email. Boarders whose families live abroad and in different time zones are allowed to telephone their parents at times that are convenient to them and their

families. It is clear that the school values the boarders need to be in contact with their loved ones.

The process of inducting new boarders is sensitive and nurturing, especially for the more vulnerable children. All new boarders are given a handbook before they arrive at the school. The handbook describes what they are to expect at the school, the routines and rules as well as what support is available to them if they need it. Once they are at the school each new boarder is assigned a 'buddy' who is an established boarder and who is designated to support them until they have settled in. Additionally each new boarder has an older pupil who will act as a mentor to ensure that they are supported during their induction process. There is a strong ethos and sense of community in the boarding houses which ensures that all boarders look out for each other and that individuals needing support are quickly identified.

It is clear that the views of the boarders are valued and the relationships between the staff and pupils ensure that respect and tolerance are key values in the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are able to store possessions securely. They have ample space to store belongings such as clothes. Boarding areas have undergone recent extensive refurbishment. This has led to boarding areas being clean, comfortable and in excellent condition. Each boarder can personalise their individual areas with posters and pictures.

There are ample toilets and showers for boarders to use in privacy.

A very well organised estates maintenance team ensures that any issues with regards to repair or maintenance in the boarding areas, are responded to promptly and efficiently.

The boarding areas of the school are of a very high standard.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has a very well presented and attractive prospectus which clearly outlines the ethos and what pupils and parents can expect. All the pupils have a handbook which is also very clear as to what living at the school entails, including the routines, rules and systems. Additionally, there is an accessible website which describes what the school provides as well as giving information on the very significant history attached the school, it's traditions and values.

There is a clear management structure operated in the school. The headmaster provides strong, well organised leadership and is in turn supported by senior members of staff who deputise for him when required. The deputy head in charge of boarding provides a high level of leadership and advice to the committed team who work in the boarding houses. The governing body meets regularly and minutes of these meetings suggest that the school constantly evaluates the practice and direction of the school.

Boys and girls have clearly demarked separate boarding facilities. The standard of accommodation is very similar. Boarding staff meet regularly and this ensures consistency of approach as well as excellent communication between the houses.

Staffing levels in boarding areas ensure that boarders have access and support if they need it. Supervision of boarders is set at a level commensurate with their abilities and maturity. Younger boarders receiving a higher level of supervision in comparison to older and more independent boarders.

The safety of the boarders is maintained by having a robust risk assessment process which is checked by those responsible for the boarding area, the members of staff responsible for health and safety issues and the head teacher. All members of staff liaise with each other on an informal and formal basis. Communication is achieved quickly and efficiently by the use of the school's intranet and by having regular meetings involving all members of staff.

Senior members of staff regularly check key records such as risk assessments, incident and accident records, major punishments, staff recruitment, health records and records kept on pupil's achievement and progress. The school also has a system which highlights any pupils who may need additional monitoring and support.

There is a comprehensive staff handbook which outlines policies and guidance with regards to boarding and the welfare of pupils in the school. New members of staff have a clear induction process and this involves training in child protection and the emphasis on duties of care and supervision for boarders. The school policies outline who is responsible for reviewing staff performance and training and this is also outlined in each member of staff's job description.

The level of communication between all members of staff in the school is excellent. Each pupil's needs and concerns are known to the relevant staff. The staff team is managed and supported by a senior management team who are experienced and knowledgeable, and who provide excellent oversight of the running of the school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The different backgrounds of the pupils who attend the school are celebrated and enjoyed and seen as an opportunity to learn about each other. Each pupil's individuality is acknowledged and valued, whether this be a cultural or religious difference or an individual ability to excel in a specific area. The ethos of tolerance and understanding operated in the school is reflected in the boarders' excellent behaviour and respect afforded them by both their peers and members of staff.

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

There are no recommendations.