

Farringtons School

Inspection report for boarding school

Unique reference number	SC006926
Inspection date	9 November 2009
Inspector	Cheryl Carter / Diane Thackrah
Type of Inspection	Key

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Nominated person	Catherine James
Date of last inspection	7 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

This school has been in existence since 1911 founded as a Methodist school. The school is located in spacious grounds with its own swimming pool, science laboratories and a sports hall within the campus.

The boarding facilities are provided within East House and West House. There are currently 38 boarders. Three housemistresses are responsible for the care and oversight of the boarders in boarding accommodation and they are managed by the deputy head who is in charge of boarding. The headmistress has overall responsibility for boarding care.

Summary

The service provided for boarders is satisfactory with some good areas of practice. The strengths within this boarding provision are the good sources of support available for girls. The school focuses on meeting the holistic needs of all the girls. The school's approach to equality and diversity is good. Great efforts are made to enhance the boarding experience. Boarders greatly appreciate the support and are very positive about the help and support they receive. Parents' surveys returned said that they are generally satisfied with the boarding provision.

There are some good systems in place to safeguard boarders; however, the recruitment of peripatetic staff should be improved to ensure that all children are fully protected. Boarders benefit from good health and consultation arrangements. There is a wide selection of facilities which includes extensive grounds, a swimming pool, tennis courts, a chapel and gym. Maintenance has a high profile and there are good quality risk assessments and systems in place to ensure the health and safety of all children who use the facilities.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection 14 recommendations were made to improve practice at the school. These related to the administration of medication, catering, safeguarding, pastoral care, complaints, and recruitment. The school has successfully addressed these recommendations. Boarders benefit from a more comprehensive safeguarding system that includes regular training, updated procedures and close liaison with the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Boarders now have greater influence in respect of the catering. A range of consultation systems enable boarders to have their views heard. Pastoral care for boarders has improved and boarding staff receive regular formal supervision.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There are good systems for promoting the health and well-being of boarders. Information is available to boarders in an age-appropriate format. The school's personal, social and health education programme focuses on topics such as body image, puberty, sex and relationships, pregnancy and birth, alcohol, contraception, smoking, bullying and other health issues. The Chaplain facilitates discussions on subjects including morality, spirituality and self-worth.

The school has a medication policy, which addresses the use of non-prescribed medication. None of the boarders self-medicate. Medication is securely stored and there is a record of medication that is prescribed and administered to children. Boarders receive good medical treatment and first aid. The school has a sick bay where pupils can have a consultation with the nurse in private. The school nurse is available for advice when a child feels unwell and all boarding staff are qualified first aiders. All overseas full-time boarders are registered at the local General Practitioner practice. The nurse would always accompany young people to appointments or they can also go alone if that is their wish. Parental consent has been granted to give first aid and prescribed and non-prescribed medication. There are clear records of homely remedies that are used.

Staff are aware of the needs of young people with allergies and clear information is available. Boarders enjoy a well balanced diet that takes into consideration the different races, cultures and religious needs of the young people at the school. The school has good consultation mechanisms which assist in the continual improvement of meals. The survey completed by the boarders provided mixed views. A small percentage felt that the food was too oily/fatty for their taste. Boarders voice their opinions through school surveys and via the meetings of the school council; this directly influences menu planning. The school benefits from an experienced catering manager, who demonstrates a commitment to providing a quality service that ensures a well balanced diet for children. Fresh fruit and a salad bar are routinely available. Menus indicate that there are regular 'theme' nights where food from other countries is celebrated such as Caribbean, Mexican and Italian.

Meals sampled throughout the inspection covered breakfast, lunch and dinner. Very good quality food and very good choice are available. Clean cutlery and crockery are always available. Children appear to be relaxed and to enjoy their food. Staff are available in the cafeteria and during the lunch period.

At the last environmental health inspection carried out in 2008 the school kitchen received a three star rating. Kitchen staff have received training in food hygiene and handling. The kitchen was clean and well organised. Records indicate that daily temperature checks of fridges and freezers are carried out.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The school has an anti-bullying policy in place printed in both the pupil and parent handbooks. There are comprehensive definitions of bullying and these are also displayed in houses with information on who to contact if a child has any concerns about bullying. Issues around bullying are explored fully to ensure the safety of all boarders. The school has an e-policy on cyber bullying. Boarders say that if there is unkind behaviour boarders take it to house prefects or staff and they are good at sorting things out quickly. The prefects' positions are much sought after and students must apply in Year 12. The decision to appoint a prefect is made by the headmistress. Prefects receive formal training with the deputy head.

There is a comprehensive and accessible safeguarding policy for all staff, parents and children to ensure that children are protected from abuse. Staff confirmed that they have had updated safeguarding training and have access to the policies. The deputy head holds discussions with boarders about safeguarding issues and informs them of the actions to be taken if someone makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

The use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate. The head of boarding stated that actions are less punitive and are based more on rewards. Serious disciplinary issues are passed to the headmistress and suitably recorded with outcomes. Staff tend to pass on quite minor disciplinary issues to the deputy head, for example if a girl is half an hour late returning from town. This is logged and outcomes recorded in girls' files but not entered in the incident book which is retained by the headmistress. The headmistress supports this practice as it separates the caring role from the disciplinary role and this protects the house staff's nurturing role. Boarders said rewards are very good especially earning privileges for good deeds around the house. The school also has a policy of restraint. Measures for restraint are limited to extreme situations.

Boarders' complaints are adequately responded to. The contact number of the Independent Listener, ChildLine posters and other emergency numbers are displayed in the boarding houses and are readily available to boarders. Boarders said they would go to staff to make a complaint and that they would also talk to tutors and house staff or write a letter.

Boarders are protected from the risk of fire. There are comprehensive risk assessments and checklists that relate to the safety of the premises and the protection of boarders. Plans are in place to train the maintenance team as fire wardens. There are regular practice evacuations and the estate's team are always alert and always monitor and record the exit times. Risk assessments were devised using templates from consultants and customised for each building. There is good evidence of monitoring and a record of maintenance plans. Staff are responsible for reviewing risk assessments in accordance with specific guidelines for their areas of responsibility.

Boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities. All contact sports, activities and outings have risk assessments in place; if external facilities are being used, licences are checked beforehand.

The privacy of boarders is generally well respected. Boarders do not have keys to their rooms but staff ensure that they knock on doors before entering a boarder's bedroom.

Boarders are not fully protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete procedures. The selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders is not robust. There are peripatetic teaching staff who have significant contact with boarders who did not have all the necessary checks completed before commencing work at the school.

All boarding areas have digital locks, the school grounds are very well lit and there is closed circuit television in key places and intruder alarms in some parts of the buildings. There is supervision of all unchecked visitors to the boarding houses and any agents visiting the boarding accommodation. All lettings during term time have written agreements specifying times and facilities to be used. Boarders confirmed they know the areas that are out of bounds but no map was seen. Windows have locks or restrictors and safety glass in some areas.

Boarders are protected from hazards. There are emergency plans and procedures in place for all levels of emergency. There is a health and safety policy and a security policy in place. All staff are given health and safety forms to complete, alerting them to the policies and procedures.

A signed copy is then placed on their files. There are comprehensive risk assessments for the site, individual buildings, sports activities and for all visits undertaken by the pupils.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The boarding staff are a dedicated team whose main focus is caring and nurturing the girls in a homely and structured environment. Girls are supported and encouraged in all pastoral and academic matters by a dedicated form tutor as their advocate. Specialist English as an additional language (EAL) support is available at all levels including workshops and activities. Additionally the EAL teacher refers any girls for assessment to the learning support teacher if she thinks there may be more than a language difficulty. This is a developing area.

Two examples of very good practice of the caring, nurturing approach are the weekly 'conversation partnerships' between the girls and members of staff, and the deputy head accompanying overseas girls to parents' evenings to discuss progress with staff, writing up notes and sending them to parents. Boarders comment positively on the strong relationships built within their houses and with their friends. House staff are their first line of support. Girls feel free to speak to any member of staff.

Boarders' lives are enhanced through the school's commitment to equal opportunities and the caring ethos they experience. All areas of the curriculum and recreational activities are accessible to all regardless of ability aptitude or race. As a Methodist school, attendance at Chapel is expected and girls of other faiths are welcomed. Services encompass other faiths and moral issues to make the school a thoroughly inclusive community.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Girls are encouraged to make formal and informal representations about the operation of the boarding facilities. There are informal opportunities as they see their form tutors every day and are encouraged by house staff to express their opinions and preferences on many subjects including food, activities and visits.

There are prefects who are given a written outline of their duties. Regular meetings with senior staff provide opportunities to discuss possible scenarios. The prefects act as ambassadors and represent boarders at the school council, which is regarded as the most effective formal body for implementing changes that are suggested by the girls. There was clear evidence of feedback on matters raised by the council and of changes implemented or reasons given for not implementing change.

The main means of contact with parents is by email. The school does permit the boarders to have mobile phones provided they do not use them in lessons, prep, at formal occasions or late at night. Sixth form girls may use mobile phones in the Sixth form area at lunchtime following a request through the school council. Parents are welcome to visit the school and encouraged to attend matches and match teas, concerts, services and plays.

Staff contact parents about the progress of their daughter(s) and parents are encouraged to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity. Boarders are given detailed welcome packs containing information about the school before arrival. On arrival the house staff arrange for an experienced

boarder to help the new boarder, particularly in the first two weeks, to find their way around school, accompany them to meals and make them feel welcomed.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school provides boarders with adequate sleeping accommodation, the rooms are comfortably furnished and a generous size. There are no concerns about space and all rooms have windows with restrictors. The boarders confirmed that there is adequate storage space and that they are able to personalise their bedrooms with photos, posters and other items.

The school provides boarders with a locker in their bedroom and also one for school where they can keep their possessions. Boarders feel that possessions are well looked after by staff; however, some girls would like a key to their bedrooms. House staff look after money, passports, airline tickets and other valuables belonging to boarders. Records indicate that this is handled safely.

Boarding accommodation is located in very pleasant, well maintained and extensive grounds. Students have access to modern facilities. These include a swimming pool, tennis courts, a library, a sports hall, a chapel, a music room and computer suite. Boarders have adequate toilet and bathing facilities in both East and West House. There are also facilities for boarders to make snacks and drinks.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

There is a suitable statement of boarding principles and practice in place and available to all parents. The management and development of boarding is led by the headmistress and the deputy head with strong support from members of the governing body. They are very experienced managers with extensive external training. In-service training to all staff including boarding staff is delivered by the managers and specific training for the boarding staff is currently being developed.

The nurse plays a key role in boarding and receives good support from governors, as well as guidance and advice from the local Primary Care Trust. There is a Boarding Handbook containing clear policies and protocols available to all staff. Clear guidance on house routines and conduct is included and the induction for house staff ensures they understand their role. Governors receive regular reports and safeguarding is a standard item.

Recruitment practice is being improved but is not uniformly good as reported in staying safe. All boarding staff work in both houses ensuring consistency of practice and providing security for the girls in their care. There is good communication between the house staff, the nurse and the tutors and any pastoral issues are managed with speed and sensitivity, overseen and monitored by the deputy head or the headmistress. Supervision of girls is secure in-house and good procedures are in place to contact the girls when they are off site. Very good relationships were observed among staff and girls in the houses and across the school giving clear evidence of strong individual personal support.

The school has an excellent system of risk assessment for all buildings, activities and visits, and they are monitored at least twice a term by the appropriate member of the senior management

team. In-service training in matters of safeguarding was provided to all staff by Bromley Local Safeguarding Children Board in September 2009.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Throughout the school consideration is given to ensure personal support is equally available for all boarders. Individuality is respected and boarders are enabled to pursue their own interests. Specific needs arising from culture or religion are catered for making it easy for girls from other cultures to settle in the school.

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 the school's system for recruiting staff (including ancillary staff, contract/sessional staff and volunteers) who will work with boarders includes all those checks listed under standard 38.2 (Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards 38.2)