

Windlesham House School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Liz Driver
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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

Windlesham House School is a preparatory boarding school for girls and boys situated a few miles north of Worthing, West Sussex. The school is operated by The Malden Trust, a company limited by guarantee. Children between the ages of eight and 13 are accommodated at the school. Boarding is on a full-time basis and accommodation is provided in the main part of the school building, with separate houses for each gender.

Summary

This full announced inspection was carried out over three days. A boarding sector additional inspector also took an active role in the inspection. All key standards for boarding schools were addressed and three recommendations made at the last inspection in 2007 were revisited. Boarder and parent feedback have been taken into account whilst carrying out the inspection. All boarders had the opportunity to complete a questionnaire and numerous boarders were spoken with throughout the inspection.

This is a very caring school that is child-centred and achieves high standards throughout. The majority of pupils are boarders and the whole school is run with the welfare of the boarders in mind. There are numerous excellent aspects of the school that have resulted in five of the six outcome areas being judged as outstanding. The one area judged as good has also been identified by the school as needing development. This is in relation to accommodation standards with a five year development plan in place to address this. The school has continued to develop since the last inspection and is committed to raising standards further in the future.

Children receive excellent health care with 24 hour qualified nurse cover. There is a real and confident focus on child protection and safeguarding that results in the children feeling very safe at the school. Facilities for children to achieve and enjoy are numerous with exceptional levels of support for each child. Systems and avenues for children to have a voice and input into their lives at the school are actively engaged in by children, whose opinions are listened to and acted on. The management of the school is highly effective and coordinated. Staff are respectful of and sensitive to children's needs and wishes. Overall a happy school, with happy children and lots of smiling faces.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection carried out in 2007 three recommendations were made. The school was advised to ensure all gap students have a criminal record bureau check or equivalent in place. Currently the school has five gap students who have all supplied overseas police certificates or criminal records bureau checks in this country. It was also recommended that the school consider replacing the plastic crockery. Discussion with the headmaster's wife shows that this is still being looked at. Finally the school was recommended to continue with plans to upgrade the boys accommodation. The school's five year development plan clearly identifies this as an on going programme with improvements already made since the last inspection and further improvements planned.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The boarders have access to high quality medical treatment and responsive first aid provision. The medical centre, located in the heart of the school, is very efficiently run by qualified nurses who provide cover 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All qualified nurses have yearly checks to ensure they are currently registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council and are eligible to practice. All procedures and policies relating to health matters have been enhanced since the last inspection and enable staff to practice to very high standards. The boarders are very positive about the facilities and care given. The medical centre is modern with outstanding hygiene standards. The medical centre and its staff can clearly respond to outbreaks of illness. As a result of the swine flu epidemic the school has now installed 100 hand gel dispensers, located around the school buildings, providing enhanced health protection.

Health information for each boarder is requested from parents and updated on a regular basis. This information is shared with staff on a need to know basis and enables staff to care appropriately for the children. Record keeping throughout the medical centre is excellent. This has been enhanced, since the last inspection, due to connection with the National Health Service information technology link with the local General Practitioner's practice. The boarders have access to health surgeries twice a week when local General Practitioners visit the school. The nursing staff are highly trained and very suitably qualified to administer health care including first aid. Consents for the administration of first aid and medication administration are in place providing protection for the boarders and staff. The nurses are committed to keeping up to date with school health issues and regularly attend conferences and training. Policies and procedures, updated since the last inspection, are of an outstanding standard. Boarders who are ill receive constant supervision by the qualified nurses in very comfortable surroundings. The school has a very effective personal, social and health education programme that is age appropriate and relevant to the needs of the children. Feedback from the boarders is that they feel comfortable with accessing the medical centre if necessary.

The catering staff responsible for the provision of meals have a very good understanding of children's dietary needs and wishes in relation to a balanced diet. The variety, quality and quantity of food is very good. The school excels in its practice of having designated staff who monitor the food taken by each child at meal times, and who encourage each individual child to have a healthy balanced meal. The school caters for many different diets, for cultural and medical reasons. The children can access fresh vegetables, salad and fruit at all meal times, with cereals available before bed time. The boarders are actively involved in the food provision via the food committee that meets regularly with the catering department. Suggestions brought to the forum by the boarders have been acted on. All boarders have access to drinking water, juice, and snacks outside of meal times. Feedback from the boarders was, in general, very positive about the food provision. The school has addressed actions and recommendations made at the last environmental health department inspection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a robust and responsive anti-bullying policy. The boarders feel confident that issues associated with bullying behaviour are rigorously addressed. The vast majority of boarders state they have never been bullied; those that said they had, also said that the school acted

immediately to resolve the issues. The boarders have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying or intimidating behaviour, as seen in surveys and discussion groups. The school provides excellent education to both boarders and parents around cyber bullying. Bullying issues identified in the boarders surveys were fed back to the school and had already been identified and addressed.

The boarders are protected from the risk of harm or abuse by appropriately trained and experienced staff with robust policies and procedures that staff are fully informed of. Suitable child protection training is provided on a regular basis to all staff employed at the school including non-teaching or boarding staff and gap students. The staff have a clear understanding of key child protection matters and the action they need to take if they suspect a child is at risk of, or is, being harmed. The school liaise with the local authority child protection and safeguarding team in respect of producing robust policies, practices and procedures. The school's child protection policy has been enhanced, since the last inspection, by introducing a safeguarding policy and information about the newly implemented Independent Safeguarding Authority. There is a real and confident focus on safeguarding and child protection with competent and experienced designated staff taking overall responsibility for this. The boarders surveys evidenced that they feel safe at the school and have a variety of adults they can talk to.

Overall the behaviour of the children seen throughout the inspection was exemplary. The children were relaxed and very open about their experiences as a boarder. The school addresses inappropriate or negative behaviour in a sensitive and very suitable manner. Much emphasis is placed on positive behaviour and living together in a family environment, with outstanding outcomes and happy children. The boarders understand what sanctions can be implemented and feel these are fair and only used when necessary. The use of sanctions is kept to a minimum within a general ethos of rewarding boarders for positive actions, effort and displaying responsibility. Any parental concerns raised about sanctions given are fully addressed by the headmaster. Parents feel very comfortable that they can raise concerns. Complaints are extremely low in number and this is a reflection of the very close relationships staff have with parents and carers. Parents can easily access the school's complaints policy on their website. The boarders feel confident in raising any issues with a variety of staff. The governors are kept fully informed of any on going complaints in progress.

The boarders are protected from the risk of fire. All aspects of fire safety are addressed in a suitable manner with regular drills, tests and servicing ensuring the wellbeing of pupils and staff alike. Improvements to the fire alarm system have been made since the last inspection. A fire alarm activated, by accident, during this inspection and resulted in a full evacuation drill, was observed to be extremely well handled. The school strives to maintain a safe environment and continues to make improvements. The boarders clearly know how to evacuate in the event of an alarm being activated.

The school has a key-pad entry system to all building entry points thus maximising the safety of pupils and the general security of the premises. More closed circuit television cameras have been installed since the last inspection enhancing protection for boarders and staff around the whole school site. The recruitment of a very experienced head of facilities has also enhanced this area together with an improved maintenance response.

Suitable changing and bathing facilities provide boarders with very good privacy. No concerns were raised by boarders around lack of privacy. Children are treated with dignity and respect; this was the same for the manner in which the children responded to staff too. The school has in its development plan identified the need to update the day changing areas and showers for children.

Recruitment procedures continue to develop in line with changing legislation. Staff with responsibilities for recruitment procedures have attended safer recruitment training. The boarders are protected by the robust recruitment procedures in place. All visitors are checked and supervised if moving around the school providing enhanced protection for children.

The school ensures that any risks posed to boarders are addressed in a comprehensive fashion. Excellent risk assessments address all environmental, activity and leisure matters without limiting opportunities for boarders to engage in an active and fulfilling experience; for example, tree climbing and playing in the schools woods. This allows children to be children and enjoy age appropriate play. A robust system monitors the level of incidents and subsequently allows the school to reduce the risks further wherever possible. High risk activities are equally well addressed and risk assessed, for example, the on site climbing wall and overseas trips.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school excels in its approach to offer all children an outstanding variety of activities and continues to strengthen and expand the activities programme in the evenings and at weekends. The support given to children and the organisation involved in enabling them to access activities is outstanding. The boarders were seen to actively engage in a wide range of activities with pleasure. This is supported by a very good system that monitors which activities each child is participating in each day.

Personal support to individual children is an area that the school excels in. The staff are very committed to ensuring all boarders have someone to talk to if they need to and this is confirmed by the boarders. There is clear guidance for staff and boarders, for example the role of the peer listeners, regarding how support is given and how it can be accessed. The school employs a highly experienced and effective female counsellor who can see any child within a short referral time. The Headteacher's wife plays a very important role in the pastoral side of the school and is highly visible and accessible for both staff and children throughout the school and boarding houses. Staff communicate with the children at ease, and children are at ease talking to staff. The school's tutor system adds to the high level of support and care providing individual one to one support on a regular basis. Throughout the inspection children were happy and relaxed and spoke freely about life at the school. Feedback from boarders confirmed the variety of staff they would go to for support. Parents are very praising of the support provided by the school with feedback such as 'pastoral care is excellent, the best I have ever come across'.

The school values the different cultural needs of its boarders. During the inspection the inspectors heard of, or saw no inappropriate discrimination of gender, disability, race, religion or culture. All children are given the same opportunities to participate in all areas of the school life.

The boarders at the school do have busy lives but also have sufficient free time where they actively engage with each other. No onerous demands were seen during the inspection for any individual child.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The boarders are considered an integral aspect of the school with their views and wishes being acknowledged and acted upon. They are encouraged and supported to contribute to the manner that they receive the boarding provision. The school harbours an ethos where boarders are encouraged to show responsibility, co-operation and respect. Such an ethos is reciprocated with several forums, such as the peer listeners' group, the food committee and the school council, who all meet regularly. These forums are open and interactive allowing boarders a formal arena to contribute their thoughts. Each forum is facilitated by a member of staff who manages each meeting in a child focused and sensitive manner. The boarders were seen to express their views with ease at these forums.

The boarders are assisted to maintain contact with their families and friends. Mobile phones are not encouraged and due to very poor signal access would prove difficult. Suitable arrangements are in place for boarders to make and receive calls from parents and carers. In general this works very well. The school maintains excellent communication links with parents and have enhanced boarder communication links with family by introducing a visual communication system as well as email access. This has proved very popular with the overseas parents. The boarders state the school helps them to keep in touch with their parents whilst they are living away from home.

New boarders are helped to settle into the school by an effective buddy system and an array of information available to them. There is a clear and concise admission policy in place available for parents to access on the school's website.

Relationships between staff and the boarders are exceptional with very happy children who obviously enjoy their time at the school. Quotes gained from boarders during the inspection include, 'I wish I could stay here until I was 18 years old', 'Its amazing here' and, 'I miss my home when I am at school and then miss school when I am at home'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The boarders are provided with accommodation that is well organised and highly supervised. The houses provide appropriate protection and separation of boarders by age and gender. The girls' boarding provision is of an excellent standard with the boys' being of a good standard, although improvements have been made since the last inspection. There continues to be an on going programme of redecorating and refurbishment with future plans, identified in the schools five year development plan, to upgrade further. In general all boarders felt the accommodation was very good and enjoy the boarding experience very much.

All the boarder's accommodation is very well lit, heated and comfortable. All communal areas in the boarding houses are brightly painted and child friendly. The boarders have areas around their beds that they can personalise and sufficient storage for clothes. Some rooms in the boys dorms are full and current space is maximised. The school is very aware of this in relation to

future numbers of boarders. The standard of maintenance and cleanliness is high throughout the boarding houses. The toilet and washing provision is very good and ensures privacy for all boarders when using them. All the boarders are respectful of each others possessions with no concerns around theft being highlighted before and during the inspection. The recruitment of a new facilities' manager has led to improved maintenance throughout the site with boarders being able to report any issues directly to the maintenance manager via a book located in the school library, in addition to existing reporting systems for staff.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school achieves its aims in providing each individual child with a high standard of care and support in an environment where they are free to express their views and opinions. Individual needs are very well catered for, from religious to dietary needs. Different cultures are explored with children being involved in visits from overseas schools, charity fund raising, and the schools 'world awareness week' that introduces them to the global community.

The management of the school is highly effective and coordinated. The welfare of the boarders is given a high priority on a daily basis and at governor level. There is a well structured senior management team who are very well informed of their roles and responsibilities and effective in delivery. The boarders are cared for by high numbers of staff who are trained and sensitive to their needs. The boarding staff receive regular training to ensure they are up to date with areas such as child protection, first aid and fire safety. The staff interviewed and observed during the inspection are committed to providing excellent boarding provision. The monitoring of all areas and records is excellent with data analysed to consider risks and addresses areas identified for improvement.

The school provides clear and detailed information to parents and boarders about the boarding practices and principles of the school. The schools web site has a wealth of info for parents and prospective parents to view and is currently being redesigned with improved navigation.

The management of the boarding provision has a high profile in the school with designated roles and clear lines of responsibility. The recruitment of recent staff and future staff is a clear commitment that the school is continually developing. The appointment of new head matron, since the last inspection, has led to greater consistency in both boys and girls boarding houses practices. A new head of boys boarding is due to commence in September 2010. Currently an acting head has been in place and received much praise from parents and boarders.

The school governors are very active and put the boarding provision as a high priority on meeting agendas.

The boarders are protected by high quality risk assessments that cover any crises that may relate to their welfare. The risk assessment formats have been updated since the last inspection and are now of a high standard. The bursar has a pivotal role in the drawing up and the monitoring of risk assessments.

The boarding houses are very well organised and provide a safe and secure environment for children. The number of staff available for the supervision of boarders is consistently very high. The evening matrons are numerous in number and add to the family life of the school. There

is clear information for boarders to know which member of staff is available at all times of the day and night. The boarders report they have no difficulty in finding a member of staff when they need to. During the inspection there were always high numbers of staff present in the houses. The staff receive training commencing with induction and regular updates and are given copies of written guidance on boarding policies and practice.

The boarders are very closely supervised, due to their age, and staff are aware of their whereabouts at all times. They are very well informed of the boundaries in place in regards to where they can not access on the school site including the school grounds. The boarders are not allowed to leave the school site unaccompanied, again due to their age. There are clear protocols for staffing of organised trips away from school.

The school's long term development plan fully supports the boarding environment and provision. Currently a five year plan identifies numerous areas for improvement and further development.

The relationships between staff and children are relaxed, friendly and appropriate in manner. This is a happy school with happy children, with staff who are committed to providing very high standards of care, in a most sensitive manner.

Three quotes from parents received leading up to the inspection are as follows; `the school is everything it says it is on the box and so much more` and `as overseas parents we feel the pastoral care exceeds our expectations and our homesick child has had exceptional care` and `pastoral care is excellent, the best I have ever come across`.

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.