

# Holmwood House School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspection date</b>	30 June 2010
<b>Inspector</b>	Dorrit Andrews
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<b>Registered person</b>	Holmwood House School
<b>Head / Principal</b>	Alexander Mitchell
<b>Nominated person</b>	Alexander Mitchell
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	16 June 2008

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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

Holmwood House School was founded in 1922. Originally a boys' school, it became co-educational in 1985. Education is provided to pupils from four to 13 years of age and boarding is currently offered to pupils in Years 7 and 8. The school is a converted Victorian manor house with additional teaching blocks situated in extensive grounds. Facilities include playing fields, tennis courts, indoor swimming pool, drama studio and a newly built sports hall opened in February 2010.

Boarding accommodation is provided in the main house and comprises separate dormitories for boys and girls on different floors. In the house, boarders are cared for by a senior matron and assistant matrons. Indoor communal space is provided away from the main boarding accommodation in an area called 'the cellars' where boarders have access to a range of recreational areas. A team of teaching staff and gap students support a programme of supervised evening activities.

Boarders generally live in close proximity to the school and often choose to board as part of their experience and preparation for senior school. There are 13 weekly boarders and 62 flexi boarders, the majority of whom contributed to the inspection.

### Summary

This was an announced inspection and all key standards were inspected. Outcome areas for being healthy, staying safe, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation are all judged as good. Enjoying and achieving is judged as outstanding.

Boarders are provided with a good level of care and outstanding pastoral support. Pupils are recognised as individuals and acknowledged as having different needs. Good communication across the school community helps to support individual pupils in their day-to-day life at school and interactions between staff and pupils are observed to be caring and warm.

A series of measures and up-to-date procedures are in place to support the maintenance of a safe environment and boarders report that they feel safe. Boarding is described as 'fun' by boarders who highlight being with friends and taking part in activities as the things they particularly enjoy.

Records are maintained to a good standard overall and appropriately monitored. However, some records are not signed as required. In addition, details of the school's complaints procedure do not inform boarders they are able to contact Ofsted. Pupils value their school council but there is a need for clearer avenues of feedback following meetings. Recommendations have been raised in relation to these matters.

Recommendations from the previous inspection have been acted upon.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

The last inspection asked the school to ensure that all medication records are signed, meals provided are adequate in choice and quantity and boarders are enabled to contribute their views and opinions regarding the operation of the boarding provision. These matters have been attended to. Medication records are appropriately signed and monitored, external professional advice is sought regarding menus and a school council has been established. The action taken supports the health of boarders and the securing of their views.

The school was also asked to adequately maintain boarders' bathroom facilities and put in place a clear policy regarding security of information. A system of checks for monitoring premises is established and procedural guidance and policies are in place regarding security matters. These measures support the maintenance of a safe environment.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

The health of boarders is promoted. Personal, social and health education primarily takes place within the teaching environment of the school and is supported further in tutorials, assemblies and advice from matrons and catering staff. Pupils refer very positively to the involvement of external speakers and the valuable contribution the discussions make to their understanding of specific issues.

Boarders receive first aid and minor illness treatment as necessary from an experienced senior matron and two assistant matrons. Boarders remain registered with their own General Practitioner and parents are responsible for all medical appointments and follow up. Suitable accommodation is available for the care of ill boarders although it is usual practice for pupils to return home when unwell.

The school holds medical information of each pupil provided by parents and obtains parental consent to first aid and medical treatment. First aid training is provided to staff across the school community to ensure qualified first aiders are always available on duty. Comprehensive records are kept of accidents, injuries and treatment and parents are kept informed. However, entries in the surgery treatment book are not always signed as required.

Good, effective systems are in place for the secure storage of medication and alerting staff to particular health needs of individual pupils. Medication records are appropriately kept and matrons are fully conversant with the handling of confidential information. Pupils value the ready access to matrons and the care and attention they provide. Many boarders report 'matron is always there', 'they will help you night or day' and 'they help with any disputes'. Parents also value the role of matrons and describe them as 'excellent' and 'very caring and kind'.

The school provides pupils with healthy and nutritious meals, and systems are in place to monitor individual eating patterns. Special diets are also catered for. Catering staff engage positively with pupils and offer them gentle encouragement to try unfamiliar dishes and to eat healthily. Meal times are well organised, pupils may choose where to sit and sufficient time is allowed to finish meals properly. Menus are posted on the school's website and systems are in place for pupils, staff and parents to contribute suggestions and ideas. Some boarders and some parents think that aspects of the menus could be improved while the majority refer positively to the choice available.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The welfare and safety of boarders is promoted and good systems are in place to protect them from abuse and bullying. These include clear guidance to staff to enable them to respond appropriately, links with other professionals concerned with safeguarding children and open dialogue with pupils with regard to keeping safe. Pupils are also provided with written information of who they can contact regarding safeguarding matters, including bullying. All staff receive regular child protection training relevant to their role and demonstrate good knowledge of their duties and responsibilities.

Bullying is not identified as a problem at the school. Boarders know what to do if someone is making them unhappy and buddies receive guidance on how to refer matters to staff in the event of any concerns coming to their attention. Boarders are encouraged and supported to develop appropriate behaviour through established clear expectations and the encouragement of positive behaviour. Standards of behaviour are high and there is positive interaction amongst pupils across age groups. A system of rewards is in place and many boarders consider expectations and discipline to be fair.

The school's complaints procedure is made available to parents and pupils. Staff encourage the raising of any worries or concerns at an early stage and boarders identify a range of adults they feel able to talk to. However, the information provided to boarders does not inform them that they are able to contact Ofsted.

Boarders are protected from safety hazards and the risk of fire. Risk assessments are carried out in relation to the premises, grounds and activities. Staff and boarders are familiar with fire evacuation procedures and drills take place at different times. There is regular testing and servicing of electrical installations, fire safety equipment and fire detection systems. A fire risk assessment is in place, staff receive fire safety training and external advice is sought regarding health and safety matters.

Robust procedures are in place for the recruitment and checking of staff and the monitoring of visitors and contractors. A record of visitors is maintained and proof of identity is requested where appropriate. The public use of the school's sports hall does not establish substantial unsupervised access to pupils. Usage by local groups is formally managed and monitored by the manager of the sports hall. All staff are aware of what to do should they encounter a stranger on site and regular reminders are given to pupils about out of bounds areas. These practices reduce potential risks to the welfare of boarders.

Boarders have their own accommodation, secure from public intrusion. Boarding areas are for the exclusive use of boarders and this is reinforced by clear signage, restricted entry and security measures. Discussions with boarders evidenced that they feel safe in the boarding house and school. Boarders also report that staff show respect for their privacy and always knock on doors before entering.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders receive outstanding pastoral support and identify a range of adults across the school community to whom they feel able to go with any worries. Those identified include matrons,

tutors, gap students, teachers and members of the senior management team. The school's buddy system also contributes effectively to supporting, guiding and 'looking out for' others and is highly praised by pupils.

Formal tutorial sessions take place regularly and play a key role in monitoring individual progress. Effective communication is maintained between staff to support the needs of individual pupils with information being shared on a 'need to know' basis. Where necessary, agreed coping strategies are formulated in consultation with individual pupils to support them through particularly difficult circumstances. Such practices help pupils feel valued, aid their development and help them to progress.

Older pupils about to leave report they feel 'well prepared' for senior school and state they have experienced a 'gradual drip, drip' of expectations to develop independence, organisational skills and a sense of responsibility.

Boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination. The school promotes the integration of all boarders and demonstrates a commitment to equal opportunities. For example, there has been an increase in female staff to boarding time and there is active promotion of activities which can be enjoyed by both boys and girls. Systems are in place to support and assist pupils who have specific learning and cultural needs.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Boarders are able to contribute their views and ideas to the operation of the boarding provision through formal and informal opportunities. These include the use of questionnaires, discussions with matron, the school council and daily discussions regarding evening activities. Additions to the activity programme, changes to the layout of the television room and purchases of additional equipment have been made as a result of listening to boarders. The school council has been established since the last inspection and is welcomed by pupils. However, pupils identify further areas for improvement to strengthen its function and pupil involvement. These include meeting as a whole council and clearer avenues for feedback.

Boarders can maintain contact with their parents and families and can make and receive calls in private. Payphones are readily available in the boarding house although a high proportion of boarders have their own mobile phone. Details of telephone helpline numbers are displayed on notice boards and in information provided to pupils. Boarding is flexible with weekly boarders returning home every weekend and flexi boarders either staying occasionally or for a few nights each week. Therefore regular family contact is maintained. Staff contact parents as necessary to discuss progress or concerns and welcome contact and visits from parents. Many boarders report that their parents can just 'pop in' when dropping off or collecting siblings.

New boarders are introduced to the routine of the boarding house and are helped to settle in. Written information is provided to boarders and parents. Details of routines and expectations are also displayed on notice boards as reminders. Experienced boarders support and guide pupils new to boarding and boarders report they were adequately informed upon joining the boarding house.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Boarders are provided with personal storage facilities in their dormitories to store clothes and personal effects. Lockers are also provided in form rooms. Boarders state they do not bring money or valuable possessions to school and report there are no problems with items going missing. Mobile phones are passed to matron for safekeeping overnight in the surgery.

Boarding accommodation is provided in the main house and comprises separate dormitories for boys and girls on different floors. Accommodation is clean, well lit and generally well maintained. Sufficient showers, baths and toilets are available to boarders in the sleeping areas; separate facilities are provided for staff. Good quality furniture is provided and boarders are encouraged to personalise their bed space with their own bedding, posters and photographs. Following consultation with boarders, roller blinds have been fitted in some dormitories and individual pin boards are to be installed to limit damage to paintwork when posters are removed.

Boarders generally live in close proximity to the school and often choose to board as part of their experience and preparation for senior school. Boarding is described as 'fun' by pupils who highlight being with friends and taking part in activities as the things they particularly enjoy. They also value the support and care received from matrons.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The management and leadership of boarding are strong and the school is committed to its further development. Good documentation, including policies, procedures and statement of boarding principles and practice, is made available to all interested parties. Information is easily accessed and regularly updated. Systems are in place to regularly monitor records of risk assessments, accidents, behaviour, and complaints. Subsequent action is taken in response, where required, to support the maintenance of a safe environment for pupils, staff and visitors. However, some records are not dated or signed which has the potential to limit the effectiveness of monitoring.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school acknowledges the individuality of pupils and positively promotes their integration into the school community. The organisation of boarding accommodation provides appropriate protection and separation of boarders by age and gender. No discrepancies are reported in the quality of boarding practices for boys and girls.

Boarders are adequately supervised by competent staff who are sufficient in number and clear in their role and responsibilities. A duty rota is followed in practice and includes male and female staff. Adjustments are made in response to flexi-boarding numbers and suitable arrangements are in place for covering duties at times of staff sickness and absence. Boarders are aware of who is responsible for them at specific times and report staff are always available day and night.

Good communication systems across the school community contribute effectively to the care of boarders, their well-being and overall experience of boarding. All staff, including gap students, have access to good support, guidance and training opportunities to assist them in their role. Job descriptions are in place, staff know who they are accountable to and systems are in operation for the annual appraisal 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

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure records of all treatment and first aid administered to boarders are signed (NMS 15.12)
- inform boarders they can contact Ofsted regarding any complaint concerning their welfare (NMS 5.4)
- provide clear avenues of feedback to pupils regarding the outcome of school council meetings (NMS 12)
- ensure records are signed to provide evidence of monitoring. (NMS 23)