

Farlington School

Inspection report for Boarding School

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Inspector	Angela Hunt
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

Farlington School is a girls' day and boarding school with nearly five hundred students. It provides boarding facilities for up to forty students. Full or weekly boarding is offered as well as flexi-boarding. There are currently thirty six boarders, of whom, a significant number participated in the inspection.

The boarding facilities are based in the main house. The dormitories are set within two corridors and for younger girls vary in size from four to six girls. The older girls in Year 11 and the lower sixth share study bedrooms with one other girl. All upper sixth girls have single study bedrooms.

The school is set in extensive grounds with several sports grounds, a large separate sports hall, an outside swimming pool and a farm. The students who board are able to access these facilities outside of the school day and at weekends. The school provides a full activities programme at the weekends in order to offer the students a varied and extensive choice.

The school strives to enable the girls to reach their highest standards, and prepare them for life. The school provides a holistic approach to the pastoral care of the boarders which offers the students a family environment.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This is a good service. Boarders' welfare is promoted through the excellent relationships that exist between staff and boarders and one another. Boarders can take issues to any number of people, confident that these will be addressed. The attitude and behaviour of boarders suggests that they are very content in the school. The effective leadership of boarding results in the high quality pastoral care offered to boarders. As a result, boarders feel safe and are extremely happy. Members of staff who have pastoral care responsibilities demonstrate a real commitment to improve outcomes for the boarders. Boarders are very complimentary about the care afforded to them in the boarding house.

Boarders are offered nutritious, varied meals and are encouraged to take exercise to maintain optimum health. The improvements made to the health care arrangements further promote the health care of boarders. The knowledge of the school's designated child protection officer is a strength of the school. This has inevitably assisted in promoting good partnership working to help to protect young people.

There is an excellent standard of record keeping in respect of health and safety. The

knowledge of the staff involved in this area contribute to the strength this represents in the schools' current systems.

The required recruitment checks are in place for staff who undertake pastoral care duties and responsibilities. However, more work is needed to ensure that the process of staff recruitment is at all times consistent with the national minimum standards and follows safe recruitment practices. Also, work to better organise the personnel files is needed.

The school premises meet the needs of boarders. However, the kitchen facilities in the house restrict the numbers of boarders who can use this facility at any one time. Also, one particular area of the washing facilities could benefit from some improvements to enhance privacy.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school was asked to ensure that risk assessments are completed for those students who self-administer medication. Also, to ensure that a full audit of medication and a full review of health care policies is undertaken. An audit of the medical arrangements has been conducted by a community pharmacist. Following this the school has reviewed and improved elements of their health care practice. This includes completing some good work on developing a risk assessment and consent form for the self-administration of medicines. The arrangements for homely remedies have also been streamlined as has the health care policies which are now kept together in one central place. The medical centre has also been relocated and now has a waiting area for the girls. The improvements made contribute to providing good health care to promote boarders personal well-being. The necessary action has been taken by the school in response to the recommendations identified at the previous inspection of the schools boarding provision.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Boarders benefit from a good standard of health education and medical attention. Boarders' health needs are promoted through a variety of means including the personal, social and health education programme. The school operates a zero tolerance towards illegal substance and solvent abuse. This is made clear in the information made available to parents and through the policies in place.

The school nurse who is part-time is available to boarders during the school day when on duty. The school is currently recruiting a second nurse due to a vacant post recently arising. In the interim, when the school nurse is not on duty appropriate arrangements have been made for girls to receive first aid and medical treatment, through access to designated first aid trained staff members. Boarders also benefit from the services of a local General Practitioner who visits the school fortnightly and a counsellor who visits weekly.

All boarders have a medical on arrival and relevant medical information is requested as part of the admission procedure. Welfare plans are in place for boarders where appropriate and risk assessments are completed for boarders who administer their own medication. A protocol for homely remedies and a range of health care related policies are subject to regular review. Records in the medical centre are regularly monitored. This ensures compliance with procedures and promotes safe practice. Boarders can be confident that their health records are securely stored. These records contain relevant health information and emergency contact details. Good systems exist to promote the health care of boarders. This includes effective communication between boarding house staff and the school nurse and good quality recording of medication received and administered. While a book to record the disposal of medication no longer required has recently been introduced, the system to implement this is currently in progress. The productive relationship between the school nurse and pastoral care staff helps to ensure continuity of care. It also assists in the transfer of appropriate information between the medical centre and the boarding house. The log in the boarding house to record the handover of information means that care staff maintain a good knowledge of any specific health care needs. All boarding house staff are trained in first aid. Boarders are positive about the good level of support afforded to them to promote their general health and well-being.

Boarders benefit from healthy and nutritious meals that meet their individual dietary needs well. Fresh fruit and vegetables are available and menus reflect a good variety of nutritionally balanced meals. Generally boarders commented that the food is good and that they value the choice on offer. The boarding house has a small kitchen area where boarders can prepare snacks and drinks. However, the limited space available means that no more than two boarders can use this area at any one time. Several boarders made comments about this and of preferring a larger area to use outside of the school day during evenings and week-ends.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Good behaviour is given positive attention and sanctions which are rarely needed are transparent, consistently applied and fair. As a result, the girls are clear about right and wrong and show maturity, politeness and consideration to others.

The designated person for child protection has undertaken the required level of training and demonstrates a high level of knowledge in the area of safeguarding. Robust policies and well-established systems are in place to deal with all child protection matters and any allegations. For example, staff know what to do in the event of an allegation or suspicion of abuse including their duty to report matters of concern immediately. One external partner complimented the schools' designated child protection officer for the prompt and efficient way a referral was made. Training on child protection is a strong feature of the ongoing annual training programme in place and clear records of when training in safeguarding has taken place means that this is seen as a priority area for all staff. Boarders are well supervised and say they feel safe.

Boarders can take issues to any number of people, confident that these will be addressed. This helps to promote their general well-being. Regular house meetings and meetings between staff who have pastoral care responsibilities mean that any issues in regard to an individual's holistic well-being is responded to appropriately to minimise any harm or risk. The attitude and behaviour of boarders suggests that they are happy.

While staff with pastoral care responsibilities have had the required checks, the procedures in place for this is less clear. Recruitment records are securely kept. However, the organisation of these is not consistent. Any contractors that are required to attend to maintenance matters at times when boarders are present are supervised by staff who have had the necessary checks.

The policy for the management of bullying is comprehensive and includes advice to pupils, parents and staff. A separate policy on cyber bullying demonstrates a good understanding of the safer use of electronic means of communication and helps to safeguard boarders from potential harm. Boarders confirm that they do not identify bullying as a problem at the school. The anti-bullying policy is detailed and highlights that any bullying would be taken seriously.

The school does not have a significant number of complaints. All complaints made are taken seriously and responded to within agreed timescales.

Boarders can be assured that sufficient measures are taken to minimise the risk of fire. The bursar's and facilities manager's knowledge of fire safety is impressive. A detailed fire risk assessment which covers the boarding house is in place. Regular fire drills are undertaken and appropriate records which are subject to regular monitoring are kept. In addition, there has been a commendable initiative set up to compliment the robust arrangements in place whereby gap students regularly check the fire safety arrangements in the boarding house. This involves checking that fire exits are clear, that fire extinguishers and emergency lighting are in good order, and that window restrictors are in place where needed. A checklist which is regularly monitored has been developed for gap students to complete when undertaking the required daily and weekly checks. All boarders and house staff are familiar with fire evacuation procedures.

The school undertakes risk assessments for all high risk activities. These include outdoor games, the swimming pool, sport activities and outings. All possible risks are identified with actions recorded to reduce risk.

A health and safety committee meet regularly to manage health and safety issues. Members of this committee include two of the school governors who take their responsibility seriously. It is hoped given the importance of health and safety; that wider representation on this committee to include heads of departments may further strengthen the emphasis given to this core area.

Unsupervised access to the boarding accommodation is prevented by good security and effective monitoring of visitors.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The school treats girls as individuals and demonstrates sensitivity to the religious, cultural, racial and linguistic backgrounds of boarders. Specific dietary needs are respected and catered for where required. Good systems are in place for any boarder who needs personal guidance and support. For example, additional support for boarders where English is a second language is provided. The nurturing environment evident in boarding and the good rapport between boarders help the girls to settle into boarding life. 'The Rough Guide to Boarding at Farlington' issued to all boarders and the information on the house notice board gives useful guidance which helps girls to settle into boarding life.

Boarders show a good level of enthusiasm in the range and choice of activities out of class time. Activities available include a variety of clubs, court games, art room activities, visits to London, shopping trips, theatre shows and day trips to places of interest and tourist attractions. Regular boarding house meetings encourage boarders to offer ideas about suggested activities. Boarders said that they also liked the option of not being involved in an activity and that they were appreciative of this. In discussion with boarders they indicated that they have sufficient time for rest and relaxation.

Good arrangements are in place for any boarder who needs personal guidance and support. Notice boards in the school give contact details of organisations offering support. Boarders have a range of people within the school they can talk to and staff are clear to boarders about the limits of confidentiality.

Positive relationships exist between staff and boarders. The relationship between staff and boarders is based on mutual respect. Staff recognise the unique situation boarders are in and promote an environment of tolerance and understanding.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders are able to express their opinions about the boarding provision in a variety of ways. Opportunities available include regular house meetings and talking with a variety of staff. Boarders indicated that staff know them well and care about how they are doing. Good communication between pastoral care staff and parents/carers makes sure that there is regular ongoing dialogue to promote boarders economic well-being. The pastoral care staff are keen and demonstrate a caring and nurturing ethos. They indicate a clear commitment to improving outcomes for young people. A parental survey sums this up by describing Farlington as a very caring school.

Private contact for boarders with family and friends is maintained through a variety of methods. This includes access to email, telephones and letters. Access to a

telephone in the house for parents and friends to call individual boarders is provided. For those boarders who are either weekly or flexi boarders they see their parents/carers during week days and weekends.

Boarders have the opportunity to contribute to the day to day running of the boarding provision. Opportunities for boarders to express their ideas include regular house meetings and less formal methods such as speaking to the housemistress and other house staff.

Positive relationships exist between staff and boarders. The relationship between staff and boarders is based on mutual respect. Staff recognise the unique situation boarders are in and promote an environment of tolerance and understanding.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The boarding accommodation is based in the main house. This comprises of dormitories which are spread across two corridors. There is a pleasant lounge area and a small kitchen area. However, due to the size of the kitchen area there is a limit of two boarders using it at any one time.

Dormitories vary in occupancy with younger girls sharing a dormitory with four to six other girls. Older girls in Year 11 and the lower sixth share with one other girl. All upper sixth girls have single study bedrooms. The dormitories are comfortable and there is evidence of girls personalising their rooms as well as the communal areas. The level of cleanliness in the boarding accommodation is of a very good standard throughout.

Each boarder has a locked facility to keep their personal possessions safe. Boarders confirm that their privacy is respected and that staff knock before entering their dormitories.

The house has a sufficient number of toilet and washing facilities and boarders indicate that the accommodation generally meets their needs. However, one particular area of the washing facilities could benefit from some improvements to enhance privacy. This relates to the bath in the main bathroom area where there are gaps above and below the partitions. Boarders made comment to the location of the bath and of the gaps above and below the partitioning impinging on the level of privacy when using this bath.

A work book for logging maintenance issues requiring attention and daily checks of this by maintenance personnel ensure that maintenance matters are dealt with quickly. This results in the house being maintained to a high standard of upkeep throughout.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Boarders spoken to indicated that the school values the varied diversity and cultural differences which exist in boarding. Boarders say that they are valued and respected as individuals and enjoy learning about each others backgrounds. Boarders felt secure in the knowledge that any forms of discrimination would be acknowledged and dealt with appropriately by the school.

Staff responsible for providing pastoral care promote equality through ensuring boarders are respected and valued as individuals and through the accessibility of good quality information. Good support systems exist and a comprehensive range of accessible policies covering equal opportunities, promoting diversity and non-discriminatory practice are available.

The leadership of boarding is good and is viewed positively by boarders. There are effective management systems in place to helpfully evaluate the quality of pastoral care. For example, regular meetings to share information and the regular monitoring of the schools records which contribute to boarders' welfare.

Practices in place focus on the health, safety and welfare of boarders ensuring their needs are met in a safe and secure environment.

The organisation of boarding is well planned and monitored to ensure facilities in the house meet the needs of boarders. Boarders are well supervised by staff during the day and in the evening. Training on first aid, child protection and fire safety is well organised for boarding house staff and all staff take seriously their responsibilities in these areas.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that the school's system for recruiting staff is reviewed to make sure that the process followed complies with the required standard (NMS 38)
- review the partitioning currently between the bath and toilet in the main bathroom to improve the privacy arrangements. (NMS 44.1)