

Summer Fields

Inspection report for Boarding School

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Inspector	Christopher Garrett / Kevin Whatley
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	Summer Fields School, Mayfield Road, OXFORD, OX2 7EN
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Head/ Principal	
Nominated person	David Faber
Date of last inspection	07/11/2007

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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

Summer Fields is a boarding preparatory school for boys for approximately 220 full boarders and 15 day pupils. The boarding accommodation comprises of seven lodges (boarding houses). One is a part of the main school building and the others are separate buildings located in the school grounds and in a road adjacent to the school site. The lodges vary considerably in size, nature and character. The smallest accommodates 20 boarders and the largest 39 boarders. Boarders are allocated to a lodge according to age and as they grow up they move on to a new lodge. Each lodge has a lodge master and lodge mother supported by either an assistant lodge master and/or a matron who is usually a gap student. Other members of staff are attached to the lodge and provide additional cover when required.

The boarding arrangements at the school are such that the boarders spend relatively little time in their lodges. Boys go to the main school building after rise and return in the evening to play and prepare for bed. Boarders have access to a medical centre run by qualified nursing staff located in the main school building.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The purpose of this visit was to conduct an announced key inspection of the boarding provision. During the inspection all of the key national minimum standards for boarding schools were inspected. Some additional standards were also inspected.

The overall standard of care for the boarders is good. The outcome groups relating to being healthy, enjoying and achieving and making a positive contribution are assessed and judged as outstanding. The outcome groups for staying safe, achieving economic well-being and organisation are assessed and judged as good.

Boarders enjoy their boarding experience. Boarders' opinions are routinely sought about the organisation of boarding and their views and observations are listened to. Boarders feel safe in the school. Relationships between boarding staff and the boarders is very good. All of the boarders identify a number of adults that they can talk to if they have a concerns or worries. Boarders are appreciative of the support that they get from their boarding staff. Boarders have access to an outstanding range of activities.

The head of boarding role is more substantive and is fully established. The head of boarding provides effective leadership and has raised the profile and standard of boarding within school. The boarders are cared for by a dedicated and committed boarding team who receive training which helps them to fulfil their roles and

responsibilities.

All of the boarders contributed to this inspection by either completing questionnaires and/or meeting with the inspectors. All boarders offered a range of positive comments about boarding in the school.

Two good practice recommendations relating to the recording of complaints and the rationalisation of the school's vetting and recruitment procedures were made following this inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has been proactive and has either fully addressed or in the process of addressing the recommendations made following the last inspection.

The school was asked to review the process for consulting with the boarders about menus and the quality of food. A 'food suggestion' club has been reinstated and boarders are able to attend this to raise any issues or observation that they have about the food in the school. A system has been introduced through which boarders can individually vote on what meals that wish to remain on the menu and those that they would like removed. Boarders are listened to and are able to influence changes.

Guidance has been provided to all staff on the use of sanctions which ensures that these are consistently used throughout each of the lodges.

The school was asked to implement regular checks and servicing on fire alarm systems and equipment and ensure that appropriate records are kept. Arrangements are in place for regular checks to be made on the fire equipment and systems by members of the school's maintenance team. External contractors are appointed and undertake the regular servicing of all fire equipment. Well-organised individual fire logbooks have been created for each of the lodges in which all fire safety and other related information is routinely recorded.

The school has implemented systems for the monitoring of key records. These are used to identify areas of concerns and appropriate action is taken to address these.

The school was asked review the use of listening devices and the access to communal areas through shower rooms and bathrooms. The boarder's privacy has been improved in the two lodges where these issues had been found. This has been achieved by the removal of listening devices to supervise boarders. The accommodation in one of the lodges has been reorganised so that boarders have a greater level of privacy whilst they are showering. Plans are being considered for a similar problem in another of the lodges to be resolved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' health is promoted to a very good standard. The school has appropriate policies on countering major risks to health such as alcohol, smoking and substance misuse. Advice, guidance and information is provided to boarders via a comprehensive personal, health and social education programme. Matters including alcohol and drug awareness are delivered at a suitable level, providing a balance between education, lifestyle and personal choices. The programme is ingrained within the school curriculum and is positively supported by the whole staff team. The programme allows boarders regular opportunities to consider and debate the practical, social and indeed moral issues associated with keeping oneself healthy.

Boarders have their health care needs met well and feel that they are looked after. The physical and medical needs of boarders are identified at the point of admission and acted upon accordingly. Medical cover is provided 24-hours a day, seven days a week, by experienced and qualified staff. The medical centre is situated at the heart of the school operating an 'open door' policy which allows boarders easy access.

Health care planning incorporates previous and current health concerns including details of immunisation histories and allergies. Where boarders have specific health care issues plans are implemented that provide clear guidance to staff. Additional training is provided to staff to enable them to respond to medical emergencies, such as the giving of first aid or the administering of anti-allergic reaction treatments. Further expert advice is sought for boarders who have particular physical needs with inset training provided to all staff when required. Liaison between staff is robust with the health care needs of boarders being addressed consistently within both the educational and pastoral environment.

Boarders receive an excellent standard of catering provision. Mealtimes are an important aspect of school life and take place in a pleasant and relaxed environment. Since the last inspection considerable improvements have been made to the catering department with a new kitchen and modern serving area offering high standards of meal preparation and service. Each mealtime provides boarders with a number of choices including vegetarian, meat, fish and salad options. Boarders also have snack times provided mid- morning and afternoon, with freshly made soup and homemade cakes being available. Staff are mindful of the daily nutritional and fluid intake of boarders and clearly encourage and monitor healthy eating habits. Boarders have a good understanding of healthy eating.

Menu planning takes account of any special dietary or cultural needs providing a nutritious, varied and balanced diet. The school is intent on providing healthy catering services and has lessened allergy risks by only producing 'nut free' meals.

Boarders commented most positively about the quality and variety of meals on offer and clearly have their views taken into account. The restarting of the 'Guzzlers' food committee group, has enabled boarders to consider issues and bring ideas from the

boarding community. Most recently ideas taken to the group has led to the introduction of new and speedier toasters for the breakfast routine.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school is proactive in raising the boarders' awareness of bullying. The school provides a clear message that bullying, in any form, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Boarders are encouraged to seek support if they observe bullying or feel that they have been bullied. Most of the boarders advise that bullying is not an issue within the school and that any incidents are dealt with effectively and promptly by the staff. The boarders are given advice and guidance that raises their awareness of cyber bullying. Effective steps are taken to protect the boarders from potential harm when using the internet and communicating using electronic mail applications. Systems are in place which ensure the safe access to internet and use of electronic communication system whilst not compromising the privacy of the boarders.

The welfare of the boarders is promoted and protected by the school's robust procedure and systems for responding to any allegation or suspicions of abuse. The school has forged close links with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The school have two suitably trained designated staff who lead and co-ordinate the response to any child protection or safeguarding concerns. This arrangement ensures that staff have access to designated person at all times.

The school takes positive steps to ensure that its staff have the awareness knowledge and skills to respond to child protection and safeguarding issues. The lead designated member of staff is trained to provide training on behalf of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. This arrangement ensures that the school and the staff are kept informed of any developments or changes in child protection and safeguarding. Child protection training is provided to the whole staff team and is regularly updated. Boarding staff are fully aware of the procedures that are in place and demonstrate a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in responding to an allegation or suspicion of abuse.

Boarders have a good understanding of what standard of behaviour is expected from them and are aware that there may be consequences if their behaviour is not appropriate or acceptable. The boarders' behaviour is seen as being very good and there is a minimal use of boarding sanctions. Boarding staff only use agreed sanctions which are slightly modified to make them suitably age appropriate for use in each of the lodges. Boarders advise that the school rules are fair and understand why they are in place. One of the boarders explained that, 'rules are to keep us safe and help us stop doing things we should not do'. Boarders state that staff act fairly when giving out any sanctions or reprimands. All sanctions are routinely recorded and there is a satisfactory arrangement in place for these to be monitored.

Details of the school's complaints policy are accessible to all parents on the school's website. The policy sets out how parents can raise issues and concerns with the

school and what action they can take if they are not satisfied with the school's response. Significant issues and details of formal complaints are logged. There is evidence which shows how some issues and complaints have been responded to. However, it is not possible to determine what action and the outcome that has been achieved for all of the entries. No recent formal complaints have been made to the school. The boarders are encouraged to share any concerns or issues with adults or older boarders in the school. Boarders express their confidence in being able to take any issues and concerns directly to staff and say that they are listened to.

The school has established systems in place which ensure that the boarders live in a safe and secure environment. These include the regular checking and servicing of fire safety and detection equipment. A fire risk assessment is in place for each of the lodges. These are regularly reviewed and significant findings have been acted on. The boarders and staff are briefed on the lodges' emergency fire procedures and regularly participate in practice night-time evacuations. Boarding staff are provided with fire awareness training. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for identifying potential hazards in the grounds, buildings and activities undertaken by the boarders. These are regularly reviewed and updated.

The school has its own maintenance team which ensures that the grounds and buildings are well maintained and are safe. There is a good system for reporting damage and maintenance issues which ensure that these are dealt with promptly. No significant or potential health and safety hazards were identified during visits to the lodges or during the tour of the school and the grounds.

The school is fully aware of the security risks inherent to a campus located within an urban residential area. Good security measures are in place to ensure that boarders' accommodation, school grounds and buildings are secure from public intrusion. Procedures are in place to ensure that boarders do not have contact with outside parties who have permission from the school to access and use some of its facilities.

Visitors to the school are required to sign in and wear a school identification badge during their visits. Contractors carrying out work in the school during term time are supervised by a member of the school's maintenance team. Boarders state that they feel safe and secure within the school.

The boarding staff follow practices that demonstrate a good respect for the boarders' privacy. For example, supervision is seen to be age appropriate and not delivered in an intrusive manner. Boarding staff are given guidance on how and when it is appropriate for them to enter shower and bathrooms when they are in use. Good arrangements are made for the boarders to be able to make telephone calls with their parents and friends in private.

Following the last inspection the coordination of all staff recruitment and vetting has been centralised and is now the principle responsibility of the school's human resource officer. The school has reviewed its vetting procedures in consultation with the Local Children's Safeguarding Board. The school has commenced a programme of rationalising its procedures to ensure compliance with current guidance and the

boarding school standards. A programme of safer recruitment training has been implemented for all staff whose responsibilities include the appointment of staff. There is an established procedure for obtaining national police checks for gap students and applying for Criminal Record Bureau checks after they have arrived at the school.

There are some inconsistencies in the recording of recruitment checks. These include absence of some references, interview notes and records of telephone verification on references.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Chaplin and nurse. The counselling network provides additional support to boarders and staff. Such an experienced group are available to provide guidance and intervention for the emotional needs of boarders. The school has developed good links with external agencies when specific issues need to be referred for specialist support. Boarders state there are a multitude of people whom they can confide in, noting they are listened to extremely well.

The ethos of the school encourages inclusion and participation. School culture centres around an idea of treating each other with mutual respect and understanding. Boarders are treated fairly being assisted to feel a part of their particular living group and the wider school community. Overseas boarders report that the school encourages them to integrate fully while acknowledging and respecting their cultural identity. The school are mindful of the dynamics of each living group and ensure lodges are balanced. Dormitories are arranged taking into account friendship groups and the need to avoid isolating others. The approach taken in sports and activities ensures as many boarders as possible are enabled to participate irrespective of their talents and skills. No boarders raised issues of discrimination and none were observed.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Systems for listening to and obtaining the views of boarders are fully integrated into the running of the school. There are a number of forums available for the boarders to be consulted about matters that affect their daily boarding life. For example, the Guzzlers Group provides an opportunity to comment on the school catering. Boarders are able to give instant feedback on meals that they have and to vote on whether they remain or are taken off the menu. The lodges set up meetings, questionnaires and suggestion boxes to obtain the boarders. Pupils and boarders have some say in the selection of prefects. A very large majority of the boarders indicate that they are consulted with though there are differing views on the frequency that this occurs. However there is ample evidence that boarders are listened to and are able to bring about changes.

The school is fully aware of the importance of the boarders being able to maintain contact with their families and friends. Boarders are not allowed mobile phones. Overseas students are allowed these and hand-held communication devices when that are travelling to and from the school. Boarders are able to make calls from telephone boxes that are located in the main school building. The boarders have telephone cards which restrict the numbers that can be called. Staff do not have to supervise or monitor the use of the telephone and boarders can make their calls in private. The school has arranged for a specially adapted phone for use by one of the boarders. Each boarder has an email account which is monitored by the school. Overseas students are satisfied with the arrangements for them to keep in contact with their parents. Boarders are encouraged to write home on a weekly basis. Parents comment positively on the communication that the school has with them. The daily blog issued by one of the lodge masters is very much appreciated and parents comment that it makes them feel more involved in their sons' boarding experiences.

New boarders are given support that helps them settle into the school. Boarders and their parents receive handbooks before the boys arrive at the school. These provide detailed information including daily routines and boarding related matters. The inclusion of a vocabulary of words and terms used in the school helps the boys to have some insight and understanding of its tradition before they arrive. New arrivals are given support either by members of their peer group or from older boys. Parents are appreciative of the understanding that the school has about how they and their children can feel during the first few weeks that they are apart. One parent explains that the school is, 'brilliant at dealing with homesickness and with anxious parents.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders have their money and possessions protected and respected. Storage space is made available should it be required. Boarders are not encouraged to bring in expensive items are not allowed to have mobile phones. The school ethos encourages trust and respect with a clear expectation on valuing the possessions of others.

Boarders are provided with a satisfactory standard of accommodation. Boarding accommodation is provided in seven lodges. These are located within the main school building, the campus and in the street adjacent to the school. Each lodge has a distinctive identity. Staff and boarding accommodation is separate. All accommodation is suitably maintained with both the décor and furnishings being appropriate and homely. Dormitories are nicely arranged and boarders are encouraged to personalise their bed spaces with their own quilts, pictures, photos and posters. Communal areas vary in size and availability. The lodges offer a good standard of facilities with modern entertainment equipment such as TV's, DVD's and computers. Lodges appear relaxed and homely.

There are ample toilets shower and washing facilities. All areas clean tidy and free from offensive odours.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The boarding provision is managed and organised in a manner that delivers and maintains a good standard of care and supervision of the boarders. Boarders enjoy their residential experience. The head of boarding provides effective leadership has a good understanding of the boarding standards. Each of the lodges has its own identity. However, there is consistency in the application of rules, boundaries and structures in all of the lodges. The inclusion of the head of boarding into the senior management team demonstrates the status that boarding has within school and the school's commitment to maintaining and improving on the standards of boarding that it provides.

Parents, boarders and staff are given details of the school's boarding principles and practice and information on how boarding is organised within the school. This information is included in a range of documentation including the school prospective, parents and boarder's handbooks. Further information including key policies is available on the school website. A DVD produced by the school provides a visual accessible presentation that covers boarding in the school. The information provided reflects the actual current boarding practice at the school.

Parents are appreciative and supportive of the way that boarding is organised. Boarders are grouped together in age groups and lodges accommodate boarders from the same year groups. One parent comments that the 'horizontal system works well', and another explains that it is 'good the boys board with others the same age'

There are established systems in place to monitor key records including sanctions, accidents and risk assessments. Action is taken on identified concerns, patterns or trends which helps to protect the boarders from actual or possible harm or discomfort.

Boarders are fully aware of the staff who look after them and how to make contact with them during the boarding periods. Boarders spend most of the free time in the school where they are supervised by duty staff and masters and normally only return to the lodges to get ready for bed. Boarding is provided in seven lodges which are overseen by a lodge master and his wife. Additional staff with boarding responsibilities including gap students are allocated to each lodge dependant on numbers, ages of boarders and the size of the building. Adults live in each of the lodges and the boarders can contact them during the night if they are feeling unwell. These staffing arrangements ensure that there is sufficient staff to meet the needs of the boarders and that there is consistency and continuity of care and supervision provided to them. Relationships between the lodge staff and boarders are seen as being good. Gap students are very enthusiastic about the school and the staff's commitment to the boarders and pupils and how well they know them. Parents

describe the boarding staff as, 'demonstrating great patience and care,' and being 'friendly supportive kind and sensitive'.

Lodge parents and other boarding staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are provided with training that helps them to meet the welfare needs of the boarders. Thorough job descriptions are in place for all boarding staff. An induction programme has been implemented for lodge staff and gap students. This covers roles, policies and guidance accidents and emergencies, pupil information, records and procedures. Staff have access to relevant policies and procedures. Training is provided on child protection, fire awareness and first aid. Training is provided on supporting boarders who have specific individual needs. Staff comment positively on the school's commitment to their professional development and the support and response given to requests to go on individual courses.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. All of the boarders are valued and respected as individuals. Ethos of the school is to encourage inclusion and participation. Boarders are all given the same opportunities regardless of age and ability. One boarder explains, 'you can be an athlete, academic or an all rounder'. Boarders are encouraged to make and express their views and opinions on matters that affect their boarding experience. The school supports boarders with different faiths and beliefs. The multi-faith prayer room, which is used by staff and boarders, provides a private space for personal reflection. Specific cultural, religious and medical needs are well met and catered for. Documents demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities and avoidance of inappropriate discrimination in all forms.

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 complaints are recorded in a clear and accessible manner (NMS 5.5)
- continue with the rationalisation of the school's vetting and recruitment procedures. (NMS 38.2)