

inspection report

Final Report Boarding School

Abberley Hall School

Abberley Hall

Worcester

Worcestershire

WR6 6DD

8th-10th November 2004

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

- 4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)
- 3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
- 2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
- 1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of School

Abberley Hall

Address

Abberley Hall, Worcester, Worcestershire, WR6 6DD

Tel No:

01299 896275

Fax No:

01299 8962875

Email Address

Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school

Board of Govenors

Name of Head

Mr John Walker

CSCI Classification

Boarding School

Type of school

Preparatory School for both girls and boys.

Date of last boarding welfare inspection

Date of Inspection Visit		8th November 2004	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		09:00 am	
Name of CSCI Inspector	1	Mrs Sue Moodie	073081
Name of CSCI Inspector	2	Ms Penny Wells	070371
Name of CSCI Inspector	3		
Name of CSCI Inspector	4		
Name of Boarding Sector Specialist Inspector (if applicable):		Mr Graham King	
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Was this inspection conducted alongside an ISI or OfSTED inspection as part of a Joint Whole School Inspection?			NO
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr. John Walker	

CONTENTS

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Brief Description of the school and Boarding Provision

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

What the school does well in Boarding Welfare

What the school should do better in Boarding Welfare

Conclusions and overview of findings on Boarding Welfare

Notifications to Local Education Authority or Secretary of State

Implementation of Recommended Actions from last inspection

Recommended Actions from this inspection

Advisory Recommendations from this inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods Used & Findings

Inspection Methods Used

- 1. Welfare Policies and Procedures**
- 2. Organisation and Management**
- 3. Welfare Support to Boarders**
- 4. Staffing**
- 5. Premises**

Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

Part D: Head's Response

D.1. Comments

D.2. Action Plan Status

D.3. Agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Boarding schools are subject to inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) to determine whether the welfare of children (ie those aged under 18) is adequately safeguarded and promoted while they are accommodated by the school.

Inspections assess the extent to which the school is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, published by the Secretary of State under Section 87C of the Children Act 1989, and other relevant requirements of the Children Act 1989 as amended.

Inspections are carried out by the CSCI, and in most cases the inspection team includes a specialist in boarding provision working, or with experience of working, in the boarding sector. Boarding welfare inspections by CSCI may also be carried out in conjunction with a full inspection of the school by the Independent Schools Inspectorate or OfSTED, so that the two inspections together constitute a Joint Whole School Inspection of the school. In such cases, a joint summary of main findings and recommendations from both inspections will also be available.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Abberley Hall School.

The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Recommended Action by the school
- Advisory recommendations on boarding welfare
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the lay assessor (where relevant)
- The Head's response and proposed action plan to address findings

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections are undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children Act 1989 as amended, with additional visits as required.

The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Abberley Hall is a Preparatory School for both boys and girls from the age of 7 years to 13. It is set within its own extensive grounds in a wooded, hilly area of northwest Worcestershire. The main house is an elegant listed building which accommodates most of the boarders, the junior girls and all of the boys. The older girls board in the adapted Coach House and former music school, also listed, and named Yates House.

The school is predominantly a boarding school, but it offers day education as well. There were 48 day boarders at the time of the inspection. The numbers of pupils who board increased within each year group, from 16 amongst those who were 8 years old at the beginning of the year to 40 who had reached 12 years. (There were only a few 7 and 13 year olds). Of the 140 boarders, (96 boys and 44 girls) 18 boys and 12 girls were part boarders, who stayed some nights a week regularly. There were no weekly boarders.

The school prepares children for entry to range of schools including all well-known public schools. It does not set an entrance exam and seeks to attract a 'vigorous mix of pupils'. It also recognises that 'the key is finding the school best suited to each pupil'. It offers Individual Learning Support for any pupil with specific difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, one group of boarders was away and only 115 boarders completed the questionnaire which formed a basis for information for the inspectors.

All of the parents of full and part-time boarders were asked for their views on the provision of boarding at the school. 16 letters came from parents in reply. They were largely fully in support of the school.

Three inspectors undertook this inspection. It was the first that looked at how far the school met the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and has acted therefore as an audit against those Standards. It is inevitable that there will be some shortcomings, but these are expected to diminish with time.

The Inspectors would like to thank the children for their co-operation and good company, their parents for the replies to our inquiries, to extend their appreciation to the staff who gave of their time and to the Headmaster who facilitated the inspectors at each point of the inspection, and provided the hospitality of his own office as a base.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL IN BOARDING WELFARE

The school was deeply committed to providing a good experience of boarding for its pupils and safeguarding their welfare at all times. This was demonstrated under all of the general headings in this report.

Welfare Policies and Procedures.

Although the information the school sent to parents was not quite complete, it did give a very accurate overview of the life of the children in the school.

The approach to bullying was sensitive and vigilant.

Children were lively and forthcoming as well as being orderly and polite. They regarded the school's discipline as fair.

Pastoral and Form Tutors, and the boarding staff, provided all children with an opportunity to raise points they were unhappy about. Boarders spoke of this with confidence.

Children's special needs were noted in both the Learning Support Department and by the Senior Matron in the surgery.

Organisation and Management.

The Headmaster provided clear and positive leadership for the management and development of boarding within the school.

The boarding houses were soundly organised.

The range of activities open to boarders was particularly broad and stimulating. Staff members led, supported and monitored these activities well. The children expressed their approval in their questionnaire replies.

Boarders used the Pastoral Tutor Groups to give their views about boarding. This process then channelled the points to the Headmaster. Children also spoke to him directly.

The prefect system was designed to recognise contribution within the school rather than to exercise authority. Prefects provided another source of support to individual children and had good links with the Headmaster.

Boarders once again turned to their Tutors for individual support, as well as their parents, friends and other staff within the school. The system for providing support has developed well.

Welfare Support to Boarders.

The school was fortunate in having a registered resident Nurse as Senior Matron and regular contact with nearby GPs. This provided a good service to children who were injured or unwell. With the Learning Support Department, the school was able to identify health and learning needs of individual children and gain external professional treatment.

Boarders spoke of the help they were given if they were homesick and how it was possible to speak to the Headmaster's wife or to the matrons.

The induction process for new boarders was thoughtful and sensitive.

Children enjoyed the food more than was usual in most boarding schools.

Staff carefully monitored boarders to check that they were not being overstretched by the opportunities open to them at the school. There were good procedures in place to ensure safety during any high-risk activities.

Staffing.

The school has ensured that there were sufficient staff available to supervise the children outside formal lesson time and to provide support when they were away from the site.

There were sufficient resident staff, backed by the presence of the Headmaster and his wife, to provide adequate contact for children at night.

Relationships between boarders and staff were confident, friendly and mutually respectful. There were no complaints from children about inappropriate intrusion.

Premises.

The accommodation for boarders was generally clean, well ventilated and well maintained. It was restricted to boarders for their use, and protected from access by the public.

Boarders had access to an excellent range of recreational areas, both inside the school and on the site.

Inspectors heard of the development of the Chalet which the school owned in France and which provided an off site experience for children.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO BETTER IN BOARDING WELFARE

Welfare Policies and Procedures.

There were some gaps in the information that should be sent to parents, such as documentation on bullying and complaints. Not all of the teaching, ancillary and Gap staff had undertaken training or induction briefing in Child Protection.

Organisation and Management.

The Crisis Management Policy needed some further development.

Welfare Support to Boarders.

The school needed to develop the safekeeping and recording of non-prescription medication and prescribed medicines in the boarding houses. It should have a written protocol on the use of non-prescription medication and household medicines.

The Equal Opportunities Policy should include a consideration of the needs of children of a different race, religion, and cultural or linguistic background.

Children needed to be able to feel that although they may need to ask for their mobile phones, they did not need parental permission to contact their parents.

The requirements of the Fire Authority for a risk assessment of the boarding provision and for recording of all equipment and procedure checks will need to be put in place.

Staffing.

There were some shortcomings in the evidence that the school had carried out all of the staff recruitment checks outlined in Standard 38.

Premises.

There were some difficulties with the locks of the toilets in Yates house, and some shared use of showering and toilet facilities between the senior and junior boys in the main house. Adapting a listed building is not straightforward and the school is encouraged to continue to meet the required standards.

The same difficulties affected the provision of the Sick Bay and its toilet and washing facilities.

CONCLUSIONS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BOARDING WELFARE

Inspectors concluded that Abberley Hall set out to provide boarders with a stimulating and secure experience of boarding. It was well led by the Headmaster and had demonstrated practices and policies that safeguarded the children's welfare.

NOTIFICATIONS TO LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY OR SECRETARY OF STATE

NO

NO
NO

The grounds for any Notification to be made are:

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FROM LAST INSPECTION					

NA

No	Standard*	Recommended Actions	

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FROM THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The Head is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how Recommended Action are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Identified below are the actions recommended on issues addressed in the main body of the report in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders adequately in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. The references below are to the relevant Standards. Non-implementation of recommended action can lead to future statutory notification of failure to safeguard and promote welfare.

No	Standard*	Recommended Action	
1	BS1	Abberley Hall is recommended to provide parents with the statement of the school's boarding principles and what boarding at the school sets out to promote, what the roles of the Housemaster and Housemistress are and how the youngest boarders are cared for. A suitable version of the statement should also be available for boarders.	
2	BS2	Parents should be sent the school's full policy on countering bullying, which should include a definition of bullying and should cover measures to prevent it and to respond to observed or reported bullying.	
3	BS3	The school's policy on child protection should include a requirement to make a referral within 24 hours of an allegation to the manager of the Duty and Assessment Team of the nearest Social Services Department of office, to include the title of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), and to reassure staff of their immunity from retribution or disciplinary action for 'whistleblowing' in good faith.	
4	BS3	All staff including newly appointed staff, ancillary staff and Gap staff, should receive briefing or training on responding to suspicions or allegations of abuse and on what actions they should take in response.	
5	BS5	The Complaints Policy and Procedure should be sent to all parents. Parents and boarders should be informed how they can contact the CSCI regarding any complaint about a boarder's welfare.	

6	BS9	The crisis management policy should broaden the range of foreseeable major incidents and crises, and provide essential telephone numbers for staff in key parts of the school buildings	
7	BS15	All medication retained in the houses by staff, or by pupils assessed by the Nurse as able to self-medicate must be kept in a lockable storage place. The administration of these medications should be recorded and monitored as outlined in Standard 15.12.	
8	BS15	The school should secure medical advice in a written protocol for the provision of non-prescription 'household' medicines for boarders.	
9	BS15	Written parental consent to emergency treatment should be extended to include non-prescription medication to boarders and to seek medical, dental or optical treatment when required.	
10	BS19	The school should make it easier for children to telephone their parents without feeling that they have to ask permission.	
11	BS26	The fire risk assessment should be completed and all emergency lighting, fire alarms and fire fighting equipment should be regularly tested and logged in the logbooks as recommended by the fire service.	
12	BS34	The school should bring up to date the job descriptions for all staff with boarding responsibilities.	
13	BS35	The written guidance for staff should include all of those listed in Appendix 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.	
14	BS38	The schools system for recruiting staff must include all of the steps outlined in Standard 38.2	
15	BS38	All adults who, after 2002, begin to live on the same premises as children but are not employed by the school, must have a Criminal Records Bureau check completed at the standard level.	
16	BS38	The appointment of Gap staff must include every element of Standard 38.2 that is possible, and the school should obtain a 'certificate of good conduct' from the relevant authorities of the student's home country where that is available.	

17	BS39	The school should have a written agreement between it and any adult not employed by the school but living in the same building as boarding accommodation that specifies all of the points covered in Standard 39.4.	
18	BS44	The school should maintain the safety, security and privacy of all of the toilets, bathrooms and showers.	
19	BS44	There should be sufficient showers and toilets for all of the boarders according to the ratios outlined in Standard 44.	
20	BS47	The school should ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all windows accessible to boarders above the ground floor that presented a risk to safety are fitted with suitable opening restrictors or other safety measures all cupboards containing any hazards are securely locked that the level of lighting around the site at night is sufficient. 	
21	BS48	The sick bay should have its own toilet and washing facilities for both boys and girls.	

ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

Identified below are advisory recommendations on welfare matters addressed in the main body of the report and based on the National Minimum Standards, made for consideration by the school.

No	Refer to Standard*	Recommendation
1	BS4	The school is advised to give further information to parents on the range of punishments that children might be asked to undertake.
2	BS15	The school is advised to have a written policy or the safe keeping and administration of medicines to pupils.
3	BS16	The school is advised to ensure that children can always summon staff assistance rapidly when they are ill at night.
4	BS19	The school is advised to explore with parents of new boarders and with children how they can best make telephone calls to parents without seeking permission from staff.

5	BS21	The school is advised to ensure that all new pupils receive suitable information and guidance before they start to board at the school.
6	BS23	The school is advised that the process of monitoring the records should be twice a term and should include evidence of any action taken in response.

*Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix. E.g. BS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following Inspection Methods have been used in the production of this report.

Direct Observation	YES
Pupil guided tour of accommodation	YES
Pupil guided tour of Recreational Areas	YES

Checks with other Organisations and Individuals

• Social Services	YES
• Fire Service	YES
• Environmental Health	YES
• DfES	NO
• School Doctor	NO
• Independent Person or Counsellor	NO
• Chair of Governors	NO
'Tracking' individual welfare arrangements	YES
Group discussion with boarders	YES
Group interviews with House staff teams	YES
Group discussion with ancillary staff	YES
Group discussion with Gap students	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Boarders' survey	YES
Meals taken with pupils	YES
Early morning and late evening visits	YES
Invitation to parents to comment	YES
Inspection of policy / practice documents	YES
Inspection of Records	YES
Visit to Sanatorium	YES
Visits to lodgings	NA
Individual interviews with pupil(s)	NO

Date of Inspection	8/11/04
Time of Inspection	09:00
Duration of Inspection (hrs.)	88.5
Number of Inspector Days spent on site	8

Pre-inspection information and the Head's evaluative statement, provided by the school, have also been taken into account in preparing this report.

SCHOOL INFORMATION:**AGE RANGE OF BOARDING
PUPILS****FRO
M****7****TO****13****NUMBER OF BOARDERS (FULL TIME + WEEKLY) AT TIME OF INSPECTION:****Boys****96****Girls****44****Total****140****Number of separate Boarding Houses****3**

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which standards have been met. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 - Standard Exceeded | (Commendable) |
| 3 - Standard Met | (No Shortfalls) |
| 2 - Standard Almost Met | (Minor Shortfalls) |
| 1 - Standard Not Met | (Major Shortfalls) |

"0" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

WELFARE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff.
- Boarders are protected from bullying.
- Boarders are protected from abuse.
- Use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate.
- Boarders' complaints are appropriately responded to.
- Boarders' health is promoted.
- Safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records.

Standard 1 (1.1 – 1.4)

A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Abberley Hall's prospectus stated that the school was a boarding school, and that it had a number of day pupils who were encouraged to board before they left. (Part boarding had been introduced recently; this enabled younger pupils to spend several nights a week boarding on a regular basis). It aimed to achieve an informal and friendly approach to school life, to combine this with a discipline that enabled all pupils to reach their potential, and to encourage each pupil to achieve both in and out of the classroom.

The booklet for parents gave them a wealth of information about the organisation of the school, but did not spell out the school's boarding principles, what boarding set out specifically to promote, what the roles of the Housemaster and Housemistress were, or who was in overall charge of the younger boarders. The newest boarders were told more in their own Pupil's Book, however, but this was written largely with the youngest children in mind, both boarders and day pupils.

Information for staff in the Policy Documents, available in the staff room. This covered all of the required elements not included within the prospectus. It outlined the aims of boarding as developing independence and maturity in a secure, safe, understanding and sympathetic environment, as developing co-operation with others, a tolerant attitude, enabling boarders to live in a community, easing the transition to senior boarding schools and beyond, and encouraging friendships. It also gave details of the boarding accommodation and how boarding in the school was organised.

To meet this standard fully the school needed to provide a comprehensive statement for parents with an appropriately written version for the boarders. Inspectors were, however, pleased to note that the elements of the statement found in the different documents did reflect well the boarding practice found within the school.

Standard 2 (2.1 – 2.6) The school should have an effective policy on countering bullying, which is known to parents, boarders and staff and which is implemented successfully in practice.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The policy on countering bullying laid out in the Policy Document Folder was full and included all of the points in Standard 2.2. Parents received some information about the policy in their booklet. They should gain an impression of how seriously the school would respond to bullying from the encouragement to contact the school immediately and the statement that “From their earliest days in the school, children are encouraged to talk about their problems”. This full policy was available to parents only on request. The Standard indicates that parents should receive the full policy.</p> <p>Children themselves had little information in their booklet, apart from the paragraph “What if I have a problem”? They were encouraged to talk to their form tutor or other adult. The school rules contained at the end a summary of the school’s position on bullying and a suggestion to children that they should all read the policy document on it, but the statement itself was not written for children. Despite this absence of a written policy expressly for them, inspectors found that children were well aware that bullying was unacceptable. They knew that they could discuss this with form tutors and with their pastoral tutors, and that it would always be reported to the Headmaster. Prefects kept the Head informed of any worries that had come to their attention. Copies of “Unhappy or Worried about something?” included things that could make children unhappy, such as the possibility of “someone hurting you by the way they talk or the things they do”.</p> <p>In the questionnaire replies, over two thirds of the boarders and part time boarders (86 children) reported that they did not get bullied or were hardly ever bullied. Those who reported being bullied sometimes (20), often (4), or most of the time (1), cited pupils of the same age as being responsible most often, (25), with older pupils referred to 11 times, adults 5 times and prefects 4 times. The figures may also include responses from some who said that they hardly ever got bullied.</p> <p>The children’s replies to this section suggested that although bullying was not a major problem for children in the school, it did occur from time to time and was a painful issue for the 5 who said that they were often bullied. The school’s policy of vigilance was appropriate and to be commended.</p>		
PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS REPORTING NEVER OR HARDLY EVER BEING BULLIED	77.4	%

Standard 3 (3.1 – 3.9)

The school should have, and follow, an appropriate policy on child protection and response to allegations or suspicions of abuse, which is consistent with local Area Child Protection Committee procedures, and is known to staff and, as appropriate, to older boarders in positions of responsibility.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

There was a full policy on child protection in the Staff Handbook. It had some omissions. It needed: to include a requirement to make a referral within 24 hours of an allegation to the Manager of the Duty and Assessment Team of the nearest Social Services Office, to change the references to the County Inspectorate to the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), and to reassure staff of their immunity from retribution of disciplinary action for 'whistleblowing' in good faith, (3.4).

With the exception of the omissions above the written procedures and guidance gave good protection to the children. There were very clear rules about invitations to staff houses, staff being alone with children and about physical contact.

There had been staff training but it had missed some more recent appointments. Inspectors found that that ancillary staff and Gap staff had not received specific child protection briefing or training and this needed to be remedied. Some of the guidance available to them in the matron's office, however, was usefully focussed on difficulties that the Gap staff might have, such as how to discourage 'ragging'.

The school's designated senior member of staff for child protection was aware of the most recent Area Child Protection Procedures, which were at the time in the Headmaster's study.

There was a policy on procedures to follow when searching for a missing child and for reporting such incidents.

Standard 4 (4.1 - 4.7)

The school should have, and follow, a fair and appropriate policy on behaviour, discipline and use of punishments, known to boarders, staff and parents.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

General information on discipline went to parents and was explained to children at the beginning of every school year. Parents were told that rules were kept to the minimum. They were displayed in the classrooms, and particular rules for particular areas of the school, such as for Ashton Hall, the Music School and the swimming pool were posted there. The Parents' Book described the main punishments, such as the Headmaster's Detention, and indicated that there were other sanctions in the form of useful jobs. It would be helpful to parents to have more information on the range of sanctions that might take place.

The behaviour of the boarders was lively and well ordered. Children observed the codes of behaviour that the Pupil's Book set out. The majority, 72 boarders, considered that punishments were given out fairly or almost always fairly, 38 thought they were fair most of the time, and 4 felt that punishments were not fairly given. There were no accounts of unfair or idiosyncratic punishments, and no examples of prefects giving them out. The tutor system provided children with the opportunity to make complaints about fairness, and matters could be taken further if needed.

Inspectors saw the red record book, kept in the staff room for easy reference by all staff, which recorded incidents and included both praise for a particularly good deed and action taken to address another one if needed. There was a blue book for detentions and work issues. The record of major punishments, which the Headmaster kept, was not seen on this occasion. The most recent causes of major punishments resulted in the temporary suspension of five pupils.

The light touch, which the school used as far as possible, followed the principle of keeping rules to the minimum. The pupils' behaviour was one of the strong features of the school.

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.7)

The school should have, and follow, an appropriate policy on responding to complaints from boarders and parents.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

The Complaints Policy and Procedure was dated October 2004 and was placed in the Resources Room with other policy documents. It had not been included within the Parent's Book, which stated that it was available on request, but boarders would know of it through the section on 'What if I have a problem?' within the Pupil's Book. This told them briefly that they should always tell their Form Tutor, other adult or their parents. It emphasised that there would always be someone to help them at school and so children should ask them first. The poster, 'Worried or Unhappy about something', reinforced this message and made clear whom they could speak to in the school and whom they could approach outside it in addition to their parents, brothers or sisters.

The pastoral tutor system, where between 6 and 8 pupils could off load problems or moans to a tutor over coffee and biscuits, provided the opportunity to resolve problems rapidly. Tutors confirmed this and children spoke of it with confidence. It constituted a very successful method of enabling children's difficulties to be aired.

The full complaints policy covered all of the points required by this Standard, except information about CSCI, and it was to be hoped that it would shortly be sent, in full, to parents without them needing to request it. The Assistant Headmaster kept a record of complaints and suggestions that parents had made. Inspection of this indicated that the school entered into a dialogue and resolved complaints, either verbally or in writing, as fully as possible. The Headmaster kept records of the most complex and long drawn out, which were few.

Number of complaints, if any, received by CSCI about the school during last 12 months:

0

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.3)

The school should have, and follow, an appropriate policy on countering major risks to health, including substance abuse.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The school had already undertaken an analysis of what was taught in Personal, Social and Health Education, Citizenship, History, Geography, Religious Studies and Science. Inspectors saw that it had covered the elements within this Standard. Tutors sensitively picked up different issues and there were also opportunities to integrate them within boarding.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.5)

Adequate records should be kept in relation to individual boarders' health and welfare needs and issues.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The Senior Matron, a qualified Nurse, kept adequate records about the boarders' health in the school surgery, in the main house. They were brief, kept in a locked cabinet with index cards for each child. A treatment and accident book were also kept there. Co-ordination with the Learning Support Department who also worked with children who had some medical or developmental need was reported to work well. The Headmaster kept personal files on each child that included reports to their families, and exchanges of letters about any progress or welfare concerns. Comments about children in files inspected were always expressed openly and drew attention to positive features about the child.

Inspectors heard the importance that staff placed on daily communication, either in person or through written records. All of the requirements of this Standard were met.

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- There is clear leadership of boarding in the school.
- Crises affecting boarders' welfare are effectively managed.
- The school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare.
- Boarders have access to a range and choice of activities.
- Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school.
- The operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare.
- Boarders receive personal support from staff.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.3)

There should be clear management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding in the school.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Headmaster, resident with his wife in one part of the main building, provided clear management and supportive leadership of the practice and development of boarding. Tasks were effectively delegated to leaders of other areas, such as the Assistant Headmaster, the Housemaster and Housemistress, and the Matrons who were under the general oversight of the Headmaster's wife. The Headmaster's wife also ably supported the Gap staff and managed the pastoral care and boarding for the youngest pupils, the catering and the cleaning staff.

The Housemaster and Housemistress were both members of the Senior Management Team; this ensured that boarding had good representation.

The Headmaster was directly responsible to the Governing Body. It held one full meeting a term and other meetings of sub-committees during the term. The Chairman received reports and was in regular touch with what was going on. Governors oversaw Health and Safety within the school; otherwise they were not directly involved but had a genuine interest in the school. The Chairman would take up any issues specifically directed to him.

Senior staff had considerable experience of boarding. Training was promoted, but only one new staff member was expected to obtain the Diploma in Boarding Education.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.3)

The school should be capable of satisfactorily managing crises affecting boarders' welfare

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The Assistant Headmaster had received training on the management of crises. The written Crisis Management Policy that included emergency procedures to follow at the school and for party leaders of trips or visits away from the school. This policy should be developed to look at a wider range of potential crises, such as outbreaks of serious illnesses, the consequences of a serious fire after immediate evacuation, and the aftermath of a tragedy. It spaces for telephone numbers should be completed and distributed in key places in the school. In other respects the policy was well thought through.

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.5)

The organisation of boarding houses or units should operate satisfactorily and provide appropriate protection and separation of boarders by age and gender.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Although there was some difference between the boarding provision for boys and that for girls, it was not substantial. Some of the boarders themselves considered that the girls had slightly better accommodation. There were facilities to provide appropriate separation of boarders both by age and gender. The youngest two year groups boarded together in the main house but had their own separate areas for boys and girls. There were no differences in the standards of welfare that were aimed for.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.6)

There should be an appropriate range and choice of activities for boarders outside teaching time.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

The range of activities that the children had access to was one of the school's strengths. Some chose to participate intensely and may leave themselves with little free time. As well as formally supervised activities with some risk attached, such as wall climbing and shooting, or orchestra or choir practices, inspectors observed some boarders having a less structured time in the evenings and being supervised with a lighter touch. In the day time children could change into boiler suits and play in the woods.

The teaching staff rather than those who had specific boarding responsibility led weekend activities. These were times when matches and play rehearsals could take place. Day boarders were fairly local and it was not difficult for them to participate in this part of school life. Some of the parents commented that their children often preferred to stay in school during an 'optional' weekend when they could go home to take part in some activity.

Boarders had access to sporting activities, recreational and hobby facilities outside class time. They also had access to the internet and inspectors found that it was well safeguarded.

The boarders themselves responded very positively to the question the survey asked, whether there were enough good activities for them. 101 of the 115 replied that there were enough or plenty of activities they liked. 9 considered that there were only just enough and 5 that there were not enough. (A parent also expressed this). Overall, however, this was a high approval rating from the children themselves and the majority of the parents. The school met this Standard well.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.2)

Boarders have opportunity to contribute views to the operation of boarding provision.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

Boarders told inspectors that they expressed their views about boarding through their Pastoral Tutor Groups. They could raise issues about the timetables and routine, the food, and any changes of plans. Issues were taken to the Headmaster, or passed on directly, and any appropriate response would go back to the children in the group. Prefects listened to what boarders said and were also in a position to pass this information on to the Headmaster. The children also said that they found the matrons easy to talk to and valued them.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.7)

Any prefect system (or equivalent) should give prefects (or equivalent) appropriate specific duties and responsibilities, with adequate staff supervision and measures to counter possible abuses of the role.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

The youngest group of boarders knew who the prefects were and told inspectors that they would go to them if they needed to. They believed that all of the top year pupils were prefects although they were not entirely sure who was head boy and head girl. The prefect system was essentially recognition for some of having been good citizens within the school. There was no authority attached to the role. Prefects had some responsibilities, however, such as unlocking parts of the school. They were not required to play the role of 'dormitory captain'. This duty had lapsed: it had performed, in the Headmaster's view, no useful purpose.

The prefects were members of the Headmaster's Pastoral Tutor Group and therefore had direct access to feedback any matters in the school that they wished to pass on. The development of this role enabled some young people to increase their sense of responsibility, have some pastoral role themselves and an opportunity to perform this outside any situation that could lead to the misuse or abuse of their powers.

This standard was well met.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.6)

Each boarder should have one or more members of staff to whom he or she can turn for personal guidance or with a personal problem.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

The system of Form Tutors and Pastoral Tutors for groups of children has been mentioned under a number of different headings in this report. Boarders cited them most often (78 times) as people they would talk to if something was worrying them, followed by friends, 77 times, and parents, 75. This indicated how effective the system was. The Senior Pastoral Tutor matched pupils with Pastoral Tutors with care. There was a separate place where a tutor group could meet and the guidance stated that each child must be able to talk to his or her Pastoral Tutor individually if he or she needed help. An atmosphere of trust was said to be essential. Links would be made between Pastoral and Form Tutors if necessary. Some matters, such as bullying, would be reported directly to the Headmaster.

In addition to those mentioned above, almost a half of the boarders referred to younger staff, the Headmaster and to older staff as people they would talk to, and between a quarter and a third cited the House Matron, Housemaster/Housemistress and Senior pupils.

WELFARE SUPPORT TO BOARDERS

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- **Boarders receive first aid and health care as necessary.**
- **Boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill.**
- **Boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal problems.**
- **Boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination.**
- **Boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families.**
- **Boarders' possessions and money are protected.**
- **New boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in.**
- **Boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school.**
- **Risk assessment and school record keeping contribute to boarders' welfare.**
- **Boarders receive good quality catering provision.**
- **Boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals.**
- **Boarders are protected from the risk of fire.**
- **Boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands.**
- **The welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school.**
- **Boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high-risk activities.**
- **Boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school.**

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.14)

Appropriate first aid and minor illness treatment are available to boarders at all times, with access to medical, dental and optical services as required.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The school was fortunate in having a registered resident nurse, (the Senior Matron), and twice weekly visits from a local GP. The Senior Matron ran the school surgery three times a day. Boarders could also attend the local GPs' Surgery any day of the week, where there were doctors (of both genders) and nurses. Arrangements were made for optical services when required and for dental treatment.

The Senior Matron kept her registration up to date through attendance at the Hereford and Worcester Group meetings for school nurses, and had attended Child Protection training.

Children were always accompanied on visits to the doctor since this was considered appropriate to their age.

The nurse was competent to give first aid and minor illness treatment. The school surgery kept some 'household' remedies. Prescription medicines, however, were given only to those for whom they were prescribed. There were some non-prescription medicines in Yates House, which were not secure and needed to be kept in a locked cabinet. The school also needed to compile a protocol for the use of household medicines that could be used, with the approval of the school doctor.

The Senior Matron assessed children for their ability to use and administer their own inhalers, but not for vitamin tablets or herbal remedies sent from abroad. Although there were good records kept by the surgery of the administration of medication, and of illnesses, accidents and injuries, there were none in the girls' house for their use of homely remedies. These should also be recorded. All boarders who self-administer should keep their medication in their own lockable storage spaces.

Parents had given a general consent to emergency treatment. This should be extended to include non-prescription medication and to seek dental and optical treatment when required. Inspectors were pleased to observe that the consent forms were sent with staff whenever pupils were involved in 'away' matches. There was good telephone contact with parents about the health of their children.

It would be good practice for the school to have a policy on the administration of medicines to pupils.

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.3)

Boarders who are ill should be regularly checked and adequately looked after by a member of staff, and be able to summon staff assistance readily and rapidly when necessary.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The presence of the Senior Matron and other boarding staff in the main school building ensured that this Standard was met there. Children had to knock on doors, although none reported difficulties in summoning staff, inspectors considered that a call bell may be beneficial in the girls house.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.8) Significant health and personal problems of individual boarders should be identified and managed appropriately.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>Good communication between the school matrons and the local doctors, the Learning Support Department, and the children's tutors ensured that it was possible to identify individual children's needs or difficulties, if necessary to use external professionals, and to maintain good contact with parents in drawing up and implementing plans to meet those needs.</p> <p>Discrete help was provided for boarders with enuresis. Children described sensitive help given to them when they were homesick; matrons were always willing to listen to them.</p> <p>There were weekly staff meetings when all staff would be asked if they had concerns about any child, and senior management meetings enabled any issues to be explored further.</p> <p>Inspectors concluded that the school identified and managed significant health and personal problems of boarders well.</p>		

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.6) Within the school, there is no inappropriate discrimination on grounds of gender, disability, race, religion, cultural background, linguistic background, sexual orientation, or academic or sporting ability. These factors are taken into account in the care of boarders, so that care is sensitive to different needs.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>The school's Equal Opportunities Policy concentrated on the opportunities that the school offered to children of a wide range of abilities, through the Learning Support Department. Many of the newer buildings had been designed with the requirements of legislation about access in mind. But the school acknowledged in its policy that its site, on the top of a hill, and the nature of the main building, created seven levels to negotiate. It stated that children in wheelchairs had been able to manage five of the levels, all of the classrooms and daytime areas. There were no children using wheelchairs during the inspection. There would be more difficulty in adapting the boarding areas but the school was exploring this.</p> <p>The school is recommended to look at any needs that children of a different race, religion, and cultural or linguistic background experience and build that into the policy. The EFL teacher provided additional support and language backup to the few pupils currently from overseas. This support was used more intensively when overseas groups visited the school, usually from Spain in the summer term. There did appear to be some issues that needed to be explored further and receive a co-ordinated approach. PSHE and Citizenship Education gave children generally the opportunity to discuss topics relating to different cultures.</p>		

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.6)**Boarders are enabled to contact their parents and families in private.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****2**

The school made a point of telling parents that they could visit the school on any match day, even if their child was not in the team. Parents were seen during the inspection having tea and buns in the entrance hall after watching a match.

The school provided two telephones for children's use: one in the main building and the other in Yates, the girls' boarding house. In addition boarders brought in their own mobile phones. These were generally used in the evenings. They were kept either in the Headmaster's office or in the Housemistress's room. Children knocked and requested their phones, or if the room was empty, came in and collected them. Again, Inspectors saw this in operation.

In the survey children were asked how easy it was to make a telephone call at school. 23 said that they would use their own mobile phones. 30 children wrote that they could make telephone calls without asking for permission, although 20 of them thought they were overheard while they did so. 24 boys and 24 girls of all ages stated that they would need to get permission to use the telephone at school.

Children were also issued with e-mail addresses and could use that to contact parents as well as write letters.

In order to meet this Standard fully, the school needed to make it easier for children to make calls without asking for permission even if they needed first to ask to enter a room to get their mobile phones. Some of the recommendations from the school to parents about minimising expectations of telephone calls until children were settled was to help children new to the school to adjust and to phone at appropriate times. The impact of this may need to be discussed and negotiated with both children and their parents.

Staff maintained good contact with parents and files showed that they would telephone or write to them, or use e-mail, for any significant welfare concern arising at the school.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.3)**Reasonable protection is provided for boarders' personal possessions and for any boarders' money or valuables looked after by the school.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Boarders and staff described the 'moneyless' system that the school operated. When children bought tuck, it was not added to a bill but taken out of their pocket money that each had, and each item was of the same value. They were also allocated £5 for any trips if they needed it from the same resource. They could order models to be bought by the staff and obtain items of stationery from the 'pen shop'. Money given to boarders would be handed in to a staff member for safekeeping. This enabled children to feel safe about money and prevented any minor stealing. It did not, however, encourage the children to learn how to manage their personal money.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.3) There is an appropriate process of induction and guidance for new boarders.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>New pupils were given a blue Pupil's Book that introduced them in a very friendly manner to the routines and the people they would meet when the first came. Not all of the youngest pupils had seen it and they suggested that a new boarder might miss it if they came at a different time in the school year, or on a different introductory day. It would be advisable to send out the Pupil's Book with the Parents' Book to ensure that all received it. Older boarders new to the school would need a version tailored to them.</p> <p>There was a guide system that ensured that each boarder had another slightly older pupil to help them and show them around at first. They were available for about two weeks or longer if needed. There were also form guides.</p> <p>The Parents' Book stated that the Headmaster's wife would ring parents on the first evening to let them know how their child was getting on. There was an exeat weekend less than two weeks after the new boarders arrived when they could go home. This contributed towards a thoughtful and sensitive introduction for the newcomers.</p> <p>This Standard was met.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.4) Any guardians appointed by the school should be subject to the same recruitment checks as staff, and their care of pupils should be monitored.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
<p>The school did not appoint guardians. In one case a teacher acted as a guardian to one overseas child and monitored the well being of other members of her family who had guardians elsewhere. The children's parents had made these arrangements. This close monitoring was good practice. This standard however, does not apply.</p>		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.4)

The Head, or a senior member of the school's staff, regularly monitors the school's records of risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents, to identify any issues requiring action.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The inspectors were advised that:

- the Assistant Headmaster monitored the school's records of risk assessments and the complaints records
- the Senior Matron and the Headmaster's wife oversaw the records of medication and accidents. Some activities had been discouraged when they had become too dangerous
- the Headmaster looked at the record book, which included information about any incidents and punishments as well as rewards and records of positive events at the school
- the Headmaster's punishment record kept details of the major punishments. The Head took appropriate action such as downplaying an event rather than making it more public, if that was considered the most effective response in the circumstance.

The school is reminded that these records should be monitored twice a term and is advised to develop a system to record this.

This Standard was met.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

Meals should be provided to boarders, which are adequate in quantity, quality and choice, and provision is made for special dietary, medical or religious needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Boarders had two different dining rooms and styles of served meals. The youngest had a 'family service' with staff sitting at large tables and serving each child at lunchtime. Children had an opportunity to express their preferences from the choices available, although an inspector noted one child having difficulty with a meal. Older boarders had a refectory style meal, served from the counter by kitchen staff while other staff members noted discretely what was being chosen, and would encourage children to take more vegetables.

The food was seen to be varied and adequate with a range of options. All meals had freshly cooked produce. Boarders generally expressed approval of the food. 24 of them described it as 'average' but a further 82 considered that it was 'good' or 'very good indeed'. This was a high level of praise for school meals and the boys were particularly positive.

Other elements of this standard were met. There were no significant outstanding recommendations from the Environmental Health Service.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.5)

Boarders have access to drinking water in both boarding and teaching areas, and to food or the means of preparing food at reasonable times in addition to main meals.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

There was access to drinking water during the day. Snacks were provided in the evenings and the tuck was available on some evenings. Only the older boarders had the freedom to make toast and snacks. It was not considered appropriate or safe for younger boarders to do so. An inspector noted that the players in a rugby game stopped for drinks at the field and the Headmaster reported that the school was seeking to have a bore hole to its own water supply. This would bring water directly to the games fields.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Boarders and boarding staff should be aware of emergency evacuation procedures from boarding accommodation. The school should comply with recommendations of the Fire Service, and should regularly carry out and record risk assessments in relation to fire, together with fire drills and any routine tests recommended by the Fire Service.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

Boarders knew of the evacuation procedures in the event of fire. There was at least one practice a term carried out in 'boarding time'. The Fire Service informed inspectors that all of the action points which they had outlined in their previous visit had been carried out with the exception of the written fire risk assessments which they were awaiting. These needed to be completed as soon as possible.

The School had just started to keep the recommended logbooks of evidence of testing the emergency lighting, the fire alarms and the fire fighting equipment. This would be inspected systematically at a later date.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

Schools where there are unusual or especially onerous demands on boarders ensure that these are appropriate to the boarders concerned and do not unacceptably affect boarders' welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Staff considered that boarding at the school could be demanding, but not over demanding. They watched to ensure that some did not overstretch themselves. Some of the multi-talented had to be restricted on the choice of activities. Personal and form tutors were reported to be quick to pick up on this. Staff also ensured that children were not given onerous duties.

Although this Standard is not strictly applicable to the school, since the demands were not unlike those of any Preparatory school, the opportunities for children to be overstretching were so considerable, and the careful monitoring of the staff so focussed, that it has ensured that what children do does not adversely affect their welfare. This Standard has therefore been met.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.2)

The welfare of any children accommodated at the school, other than pupils, is protected.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Children accommodated on the school site but who did not attend the school were the responsibility of their own parents. The school looked after other children who came to visit the school from abroad carefully during the visits. Any 'away' weekends were planned for and any periods when the visitors were not able to go away, but other children left the school, were appropriately filled with supervised activities. One of the staff had the overall responsibility for the satisfactory operation of these visits.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.6)

Identifiably high-risk activities provided for boarders should be competently supervised and accompanied by adequate and appropriate safety measures.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The school had good procedures in place to ensure that boarders' welfare was protected during high risk activities. They were undertaken with staff who were appropriately trained to carry them out. Inspectors saw both shooting and wall climbing in operation. Inspectors were surprised that some high-risk activities took place after dark. Risk assessments were carried out and a number of the risk assessments for specific activities were seen. These were under the general responsibility of the Assistant Headmaster but created by those with direct responsibility for the activity.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.5)

Boarders have access to information about events in the world outside the school, and access to local facilities, which is appropriate to their age.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The setting of the school, in the heart of the countryside, provided little in the way of immediate local facilities. Boarders valued the contacts that they had with visiting sports teams and the visits they made in return. The choir performed outside the school. There were frequent visits to the theatre each year. Newspapers were available and information about headline news of the day was posted outside dormitories. Children could also use the internet. The vitality of the life within the school compensated considerably for its being cut off from an urban environment, but there were few opportunities for children to go shopping and mix with a locally based community.

STAFFING

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Boarders are adequately supervised by staff.
- Staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site.
- Boarders are adequately supervised at night.
- Boarders are looked after by staff with specific boarding duties, with adequate induction and continued training.
- Boarders are looked after by staff following clear boarding policies and practice.
- There are sound relationships between staff and boarders.
- Boarders' personal privacy is respected.
- There is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders.
- Boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete recruitment checking procedures and there is supervision of all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.7)

The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time should be sufficient in number and deployment for the age, number and needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school ensured that there were a sufficient number of adults to supervise the children outside formal lesson time. The Gap staff supplemented the numbers working in the main building and around the classrooms, sports and other activity areas of the school during activity periods and free time.

The Assistant Headmaster arranged the weekend staffing. Four teams of staff with six members in each team had responsibility for the boarders' activities during the 'In' and 'option' weekends from Saturday afternoon after games until Sunday evening. This gave the residential staff some time off during the weekends. It also contributed towards the range of weekend activities, choir and play rehearsals, cross-country events and weekend challenges with other schools for example.

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.5)

Boarders temporarily away from the school site remain under the overall responsibility of a duty member of staff, and are able to contact a member of staff in an emergency.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Trips out were carefully planned and supervised. As well as teaching staff, matrons would accompany the first year.

Standard 33 (33.1 - 33.5)

Staff should be present, and accessible to boarders as necessary, in each boarding house at night.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

In the girls' house the Housemistress and one other adult were resident. In the main house, as well as the Housemaster and his family, the Senior Matron and other matrons were resident. Inspectors were pleased to see that the junior boarders had a chalk notice each day to say which of the matrons was on duty that night.

Boarders were confident that they could contact staff at night, and they did so for both feeling unwell and for homesickness.

Standard 34 (34.1 - 34.7)

All staff with boarding duties have job descriptions reflecting those duties, receive induction training in boarding when newly appointed, and receive regular review of their boarding practice, with opportunities for continuing training in boarding.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

Inspectors were told that there were job descriptions but that they needed to be updated. One job description was seen.

The matrons and female Gap staff met with the Headmaster's wife almost daily. They coordinated plans and identified any problems. It also gave group support to some of the youngest staff members and reinforced the standards which they were working to. The Headmaster's wife undertook the induction of this group and there was additional written guidance for them in the Resources room and the matron's office. Before they arrived, those Gap staff who acted as assistant matrons were sent a booklet of guidance specifically for them.

The Housemistress and Housemaster were both experienced and had attended short courses run by the Boarding Schools Association.

There was a system of staff review, led by the Assistant Headmaster, which provided a framework for staff development. It had been once a term but had changed to taking place once a year.

The school undertook the majority of elements of this standard well, but should update some of the job descriptions and should include induction training, guidance and briefing on child protection for all staff, including ancillary staff (see Standard 3).

Standard 35 (35.1 - 35.4)

All staff with boarding duties are provided with up to date written guidance on the school's boarding policies and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The school had compiled extensive staff guidance. The Assistant Headmaster was responsible for regularly updating it, it was held in the staff resources room and was easily available to all staff. It contained many though not all of the Policies and Documents in Appendix 1 of the National Minimum Standards. Abberley Hall had some of its own policies as well, such as 'Snow and Cold Weather Policy'.

Inspectors did not see policies on:

- the provision for pupils with particular religious, dietary, language or other cultural needs
- responses to alcohol, smoking and substance abuse
- supervision of ancillary, contract and 'unchecked' staff
- prefect duties, powers and responsibilities
- access to school premises by people outside the school

There was evidence of staff knowledge of what should be done however.

Standard 36 (36.1 - 36.4)

There are sound staff/boarder relationships.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

Inspectors found that relationships between boarders and staff were confident, friendly and mutually respectful. Boarders clearly considered that they were looked after well. The system of Pastoral Tutors and the relaxed nature of the majority of the staff/boarder relationships led to a very good system of dealing with disagreements between boarders and staff.

The school has been keen to promote appropriate relationships between staff and boarders and has met this standard well.

Standard 37 (37.1 - 37.2)

Staff supervision of boarders should avoid intruding unnecessarily on boarders' privacy.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Staff maintained different levels of practical care of the boarders, as their wide age range would require. There were no complaints from children about inappropriate intrusion and none were seen.

Standard 38 (38.1 - 38.10)

Recruitment of all staff (including ancillary staff and those on a contractual/sessional basis) and volunteers who work with boarders (as defined in the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000) includes checks through the Criminal Records Bureau checking system (enhanced as appropriate), with a satisfactory outcome. There is a satisfactory recruitment process recorded in writing.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****1**

Since the last inspection of Abberley Hall, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools has been published. This has increased the number of checks which schools are required to carry out on their prospective staff. The necessity for these changes has been underlined by the findings of the Bichard Enquiry and by subsequent advice from the Department for Education and Skill. Abberley Hall's procedure meets many but not yet all of the requirements.

A sample of seven recently appointed staff members' files showed the following:

- The school was undertaking enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks of all new staff, (except for the Gap staff). These checks included verifying identity.
- The school was requesting two references, and in each case for the teaching staff they had arrived well in advance of the date of starting at the school.

But they also revealed a number of gaps in the process:

- Most but not all of the reference requests included an enquiry as to the candidates fitness to work with children in a boarding school, but used the old form of the question rather than some version of the wording in the Standard. In this, referees were specifically asked to state any known reason why the person should not be employed to work with children and went on to tell referees that 'there should be no material mis-statement or omission relevant to the suitability of the applicant'.
- There was no evidence that the school had made contact with the referees to verify the references in all cases.
- There were no systematic notes kept of the interviews.
- There was also no evidence of contact with other previous employers in the field of working with children to check why the employment had ended.
- Letters of appointment were on file, but not copies of contracts or job descriptions.
- In most, but not all files, there photocopies of qualifications.
- In one with gaps in a CV there were notes on the CV to show that the reasons for the gaps had been explored.

The system for recruiting staff must include all of the elements set out in Standard 38.2 and this must be verifiable from the recruitment records.

The two Gap staff files were different. Both were from overseas, neither had any 'Certificate of good conduct' or equivalent although one had been asked for one. Identity was checked either through a school well known to Abberley Hall or an adult in the country concerned, equally well known. It would be advisable to request a photograph from the applicant as well, to check their identity again once they have arrived in England. One had two sets of references, the other did not. There was evidence of contact with a current school in one case but not the other. There were no contracts, but one offer of appointment was seen. There were no copies of the job description or of any school qualifications on file.

The National Minimum Standards state that 'Appointment of Gap student staff includes every element of the above recruitment checking system that is possible (even if the student

concerned is already known to the school or to a trusted school abroad or is recruited through an agency).’ (Standard 38.4). Evidence of this procedure needed to be in place.

Recruitment files were also discussed with the Head of Music, who was responsible for a large team of peripatetic music staff. The inspector was pleased to find that the Music Staff, many of whom had been employed for some time, had been asked to bring in sufficient information to complete a CRB check at enhanced level, and their qualifications for verifying if they were not already on file. This was good practice and demonstrated a concerned vigilance.

Overall, more work needed to be done to enable each staff member’s record of their recruitment process to demonstrate that each part of the procedure has been carried out. All adults employed after April 2002, living on the same premises but not employed by the school, will also need a CRB check at the standard level.

Standard 39 (39.1 - 39.4)

The school does not allow any member of staff (including ancillary staff, sessional/contract staff and volunteers) to work unsupervised with boarders unless that member of staff has been satisfactorily checked with the Criminal Records Bureau.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

As well as conducting its own CRB checks, the school had instituted a system of badges for those visitors who came to undertake work or visit officially. This inspection did not explore whether adults living in the same building as the boarders but not employed by the school had an agreement or contract that covered all of the points in Standard 39.4.

PREMISES

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- Boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation.
- Boarders have their own accommodation, secure from public intrusion.
- Boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation.
- Boarders have satisfactory provision to study.
- Boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities.
- Boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day.
- Boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas.
- Boarders are protected from safety hazards.
- Boarders are suitably accommodated when ill.
- Boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered.
- Boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school.
- The welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted.
- The welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits.

Standard 40 (40.1 - 40.8)

Boarding Houses (including dormitories and living areas) and other accommodation provided for boarders should be appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, suitably furnished, accessible to any boarders with disabilities, and adequately maintained.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The accommodation provided for girls in Yates was well decorated, clean, and with appropriate furniture. Bunk beds when used were placed in L shapes rather than directly on top of one another.

The junior children and all of the boys were in the main house. This was a more difficult building to make into homely spaces, rooms were often large with high ceilings, but they were well furnished and lit. The rooms for the youngest children were more dimly lit, but the inspector understood that it was not intended that they youngest should read in bed. If this was not the case more attention should be given to the level of the lighting.

The accommodation was generally clean, well ventilated and well maintained.

There was not yet access for boarders with physical disabilities

Standard 41 (41.1 - 41.8)
Boarding accommodation is reserved for the use of those boarders designated to use it, and protected by access by the public.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The boarding accommodation for both boys and girls was restricted to their use.

People from outside the school did come on to the school's site for swimming on set evenings a week. They had to sign in and had changing facilities that were separate from the children's.

Despite there being a path through the school, there was little public intrusion and the site appeared safe. Staff houses were well distributed around the grounds that contributed to the surveillance of the accommodation.

Standard 42 (42.1 - 42.14)
Sleeping accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders accommodated, with appropriate separation between genders, age groups and from accommodation for adults.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The sleeping accommodation was well furnished although the size of some rooms made them difficult to render homely. The dormitories were well personalised, with pictures, teddies, other soft toys, books and some games in view. All children had lockable spaces that they could use. Staff slept nearby and, as indicated earlier, there was a notice to indicate which of the matrons was on duty that night.

Children shared rooms with others in their year group, and there were opportunities to change rooms regularly. An inspectors was concerned by evidence of a wasps nest in one part of the boys' sleeping area. This issue must be monitored carefully next autumn.

Standard 43 (43.1 - 43.2)
Suitable facilities for both organised and private study are available to boarders.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Some years ago the Headmaster changed the system of private study. The time devoted to lessons was increased and what would have been prep was included within that time. There were however work stations for the oldest pupils, some were seen developing projects they were working on in the evenings. There was an intention to increase this provision to younger aged children in the near future.

Standard 44 (44.1 - 44.10)

Adequate toilet and washing facilities are readily accessible to boarders, with appropriate privacy.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

There were sufficient numbers of toilets, showers and basins in the girl's house, Yates. Girls commented that the shower curtains could become transparent when wet and did not provide sufficient privacy. Some of the toilets' locks could be easily unlocked externally. Some were in such close proximity that the doors might present a risk to fingers if opened simultaneously.

In the main house, some facilities were shared between the older and the junior boarders. Although they were adequate for each group, this sharing led to some shortage of both showers and toilets. Their use needed to be carefully monitored and adaptations made where possible to bring the provision up to the appropriate levels for both groups. The shared facilities were not likely to be used by the different groups at the same time in the evenings but this may be more problematic in the mornings. One of the locks on the junior boys toilets did not work.

Boarders considered that the showers gave less privacy than the toilets, 33 thought showers or bathrooms only just private enough or not very private, (girls, 13 and boys, 20) compared with the 21 who were only just satisfied with the toilets, or thought that they were not very private.

Standard 45 (45.1 - 45.3)

Suitable changing provision is provided for use by day.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

0

This standard was not assessed on this occasion.

Standard 46 (46.1 - 46.6)

Boarders have access to a range and choice of safe recreational areas, both indoors and outdoors.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

Abberley Hall provided excellent facilities both inside and out for recreation. There were common rooms for boarders, a special room for the youngest children called the 'Palace' where boarders and day pupils could all relax together, and classrooms and specialised rooms were available in the evenings with some staff supervision. In the daytime the younger children played in the grounds, and climbed the (allowed) trees in their boiler suits.

Access to their dormitories differed according to children's age. The school has devised clear guidelines about children's access to staff accommodation.

Standard 47 (47.1 - 47.9)

Indoor and outdoor areas used by, or accessible to, boarders should be free from reasonably avoidable safety hazards.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The grounds and outdoor areas used by the boarders were well maintained, with clearly defined boundaries. Stables, gardens, woods, paths, fishing pond, sports fields and other areas were marked clearly. A map inside the school buildings told children where to go and not to go. The grounds were well maintained and equipment and items for use were stored away safely.

Boarders were well supervised.

The school had a Health and Safety Co-ordinator, responsible for drawing up and coordinating the risk assessments for the different activities within the school and for those included in going on trips out of the school. The Pool Manager, who was also in charge of the climbing at the school, maintained the safety of the swimming pool.

Inspectors did note, in their tours around the school, that some windows in an upstairs corridor had no restraints and faced on to a considerable drop two storeys down. There was not sufficient attention to ensuring that some of the hazardous areas were sufficiently safely locked, such as a boiler house and a cleaner's cupboard. One cabin bed had a handle missing which left an exposed screw. These points were few but needed attention. Inspectors were also concerned by the level of lighting in some parts of the activity areas at night. The school should examine each area carefully.

Standard 48 (48.1 - 48.4)

Suitable accommodation should be available for the separate care of boarders who are ill.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

There was a sick bay in the main house that accommodated both day pupils (until their parents could collect them) and boarders. It was possible for children to sleep in the sick bay if their illness was more than slight. There were two side rooms with beds for two children in each. One of the two bedrooms had a basin; there was also a basin outside. There was only one toilet close by. There was no separate bathing or showering facility for the sick bay. Although seriously ill boarders would go home or to hospital, if need be, the washing and toilet facilities were not part of the accommodation and the toilet would need to be shared by both boys and girls. It did not reach the required standards for the separate care of boarders who are ill. This provision needed to be upgraded.

Standard 49 (49.1 - 49.3) Adequate laundry provision is made for boarders' clothing and bedding.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Laundry facilities were seen in both the main house and in Yates. Boarders made no complaints about the laundries. There was a good system for laundering both the children's clothes and the bedding.		

Standard 50 (50.1 - 50.2) Boarders are able to obtain minor necessary personal and stationery items while accommodated at school.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Stationary was no longer available at the school shop as it had one been. Boarders asked parents to supply necessary items and they could ask the Housemistress or matrons to purchase minor necessary personal items if they needed them. This Standard was just met.		

Standard 51 (51.1 - 51.11) Any lodgings arranged by the school to accommodate pupils provide satisfactory accommodation and supervision, are checked by the school before use, and are monitored by the school during use.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
This Standard did not apply.		

Standard 52 (52.1 - 52.8) Any off-site short-stay accommodation arranged by the school for any of its boarders provides satisfactory accommodation and supervision, is checked by the school before use (although this may not be feasible when accommodation is in private households), and is monitored by the school during use.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	0
The school had recently purchased a Chalet in France that Children and staff stay in at different times of the school year. There are also staff well known to the school who run the venture. The school considered that it provided safe accommodation of a good standard. This inspection did not explore whether the staff at the Chalet had current CRB checks. It is advised that they should have. This Standard was not assessed on this occasion.		

PART C**LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY****(where applicable)****Lay Assessor**

Signature

Date

PART D

HEAD'S RESPONSE

D.1 Head's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 8,9 and 10 November 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

"We are working on the best way to include Provider responses in the published report. In the meantime, responses received are available on request.

Action taken by the CSCI in response to Head's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the Head

YES

Head's factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

YES

Head's comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

YES

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 30 April 2005, which indicates how recommended actions and advisory recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Head's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the recommended actions in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the recommended actions and required further discussion

Head has declined to provide an action plan

Other: <enter details here>

D.3 HEAD'S AGREEMENT

Head's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I John Walker of Abberley Hall confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the recommended actions made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name	<u>J.G.W. WALKER</u>
Signature	<u></u>
Designation	<u>Headmaster</u>
Date	<u>29/4/05</u>

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of Abberley Hall am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

--

Print Name	<u></u>
Signature	<u></u>
Designation	<u></u>
Date	<u></u>

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

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S0000043032.V186513.R01

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