



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

BOARDING SCHOOL

Witham Hall School

**Witham On The Hill
Bourne
Lincolnshire
PE10 0JJ**

Lead Inspector
Patrick Toner

Key Announced Inspection
14th November 2006 08:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Boarding Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of school	Witham Hall School
Address	Witham On The Hill Bourne Lincolnshire PE10 0JJ
Telephone number	01778 590222
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Witham Hall School Trust
Name of Head	Mr David Telfer Mrs Sarah Telfer
Name of Head of Care	
Age range of boarding pupils	7-13 years
Date of last welfare inspection	

Brief Description of the School:

Witham Hall School is a co-educational preparatory school providing pre-prep, day attendance weekly and flexi-boarding. The school is located in the village of Witham-On-The-Hill, Lincolnshire between the towns of Grantham and Stamford.

This is an established school and the joint-Headteachers have been in post for 10 years. The school's main catchment area attracts children from Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Leicestershire, although some children are from further away. The school has established a good reputation for achievement in sports, art and design technology.

SUMMARY

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

This was an announced inspection and was planned as a Key Inspection to review the identified Key National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

Prior to the main inspection activity a boarders survey was carried out the results of which were analysed and used to inform the findings of this report. CSCI places a strong emphasis on listening to young people and reflecting their views.

The main inspection activity was carried out by two inspectors over a two-day period and involved discussions with key staff, groups of boarders, a tour of the boarding accommodation and group discussions with a number of boarders during the inspection visit. The inspectors also reviewed documents and sample checked policy documents.

The care of boarders was reviewed through Case Tracking; this involved sample checking their files, including planning and recording documents, also reviewing a selection of other records, policies and procedures and systems operated within the school. Observations of practice made throughout the visit also inform this report.

This inspection was carried out as part of a joint whole school inspection with the Independent Schools Inspectorate. Mr Ted Dunphy led the ISI team and Mr Patrick Toner led the CSCI team.

During joint whole school inspections the inspection teams will liaise with each other to agree methodology and share survey findings. For example where the ISI team carry out parental surveys any issues will be shared with the CSCI team to avoid parents having to fill in two survey forms, similarly CSCI will discuss any relevant issues emanating from the boarders surveys.

The inspectors were made to feel welcome, in particular the school facilitated good access to workstations for the inspection teams, enabled document reviews, group discussions with boarders and key staff in a timely manner, which greatly assisted the inspection process. There was an opportunity to meet with the chair of the governing body, have discussions with the Independent listener and meet with a number of parents who visited the school throughout the inspection.

What the school does well:

The school has a robust child protection policy and procedure and an effective anti bullying policy, there was no evidence of a bullying culture and boarders were clear about how to raise concerns. The school has a professional staff team, an effective senior management team and strong leadership of boarding welfare. Health and safety is managed professionally and there is a clear risk assessment process.

The school maintains a high standard of catering provision supported by a team of professional chefs, a well-organised kitchen, effective quality control and a healthy eating agenda.

The school has developed an effective communication system. There are daily briefings and key information is displayed about the school. In discussions with boarders it was clear they had a good understanding of the school's routines, what was expected of them as individuals and the importance of maintaining the school timetable. Communication within the staff team particularly in relation to boarding welfare is commendable. Although a small team there are effective communication channels with the remainder of the school staff, including the use of short-range radio's.

The school operates a flexi-boarding system which was clearly valued by boarders, this to a large extent has eliminated the barriers which sometimes exist between being a boarder and being a day pupil, for example day pupils may join with boarders either for breakfast or for supper depending on their commitment to various after-school activities.

Boarding staff were clear about their welfare duties and responsibilities and have developed an holistic approach to boarding welfare providing emotional warmth and security. Staff were appropriately protective, provided a safe environment and individual support, which insured children were valued and nurtured by their boarding experience.

The school is generously resourced and this is reflected in the quality of boarding provision. Boarders are treated as individuals and encouraged to personalise their living accommodation in an age appropriate manner. It was good to see children enjoying discreet supervision from trusted adults, the friendship of their peers and clearly identifying with the ethos of the school.

The school council effectively demonstrates democracy in action, observations showed boarders to be articulate and able to develop themes/issues which affected their daily lives, including sharing with their peers aspects of the need for healthy eating.

To facilitate flexi-boarding and reduce any initial anxiety the school operates a boarding buddy system, comments from the children demonstrated this was a positive initiative and helped new boarders to feel secure.

Prefects are seen as positive role models and actively support their fellow boarders, in discussions with inspectors boarders were heard to say " we love our prefects and we miss them when they leave" The school uses its gap students very well, they were seen to provide excellent support for boarders at key times during the school day.

What has improved since the last inspection?

There has been general upgrading to the fabric of the school and additional facilities provided including the well-designed assembly Hall/theatre, complete with changing rooms.

The school has responded to feedback from boarders to increase privacy particularly when showering. In general the school is quick to respond to issues or concerns and will seek to enhance the quality of provision where realistic.

What they could do better:

The school intends to further develop its targets for recycling waste and to link this activity to the curriculum.

The school is reviewing its environmental awareness agenda and may foster links with other schools in the developing world.

The school intends to review the provision of indoor games and outdoor play equipment.

The school is exploring further development of its staff recruitment and retention policy.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Recommended Actions identified during the inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders' health is promoted. (NMS 6)
- Safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records. (NMS 7)
- Boarders' receive first aid and health care as necessary.(NMS 15)
- Boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill.(NMS 16)
- Boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal Problems.(NMS 17)
- Boarders receive good quality catering provision (NMS 24)
- Boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals.(NMS 25)
- Boarders are suitably accommodated when ill. (NMS 48)
- Boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered.(NMS 49)

The Commission considers Standards 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

6 and 15

Quality in this outcome area is **Excellent**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

There are excellent system's of support available for all boarders.

EVIDENCE:

The school provides age-appropriate health education, and sensitive one to one support where appropriate. During observations boarders and in particular younger boarders were at ease in discussions with matrons. The school has a clear medication policy and all boarders have access to a high quality of medical treatment and first aid. There are appropriate arrangements for the supervision of boarders who become ill including separate accommodation for sick pupils, the accommodation seen was of a high standard.

The school has a team of three professional chefs all of whom work well together as a team and are clearly focused on maintaining the quality of food provision, which they quite rightly see as a key aspect of boarding success. The chefs attend the weekly catering meeting and engage with boarders through surveys, being present during mealtimes, monitoring wastage and educating boarders regarding the health aspects of food.

The overall management of the kitchen, including rotation of stock and appropriate storage is of a very high standard. In addition to the provision of meals and snacks, boarders also enjoy cooking as an activity during the early evening, during observations this activity was seen to be popular and rewarding.

In discussions with inspectors boarders themselves stressed how much they valued the quality of meals and snacks. Although catering for a large number of pupils there was an excellent range of choice at each meal and the presentation retained a home-cooked quality.

The general management of mealtimes ensured that boarders were able to enjoy their food in pleasant surroundings with the company of their friends, a truly social and enriching event, which helps to illustrate the schools values. Inspectors were particularly impressed by the efficiency and dedication of the ancillary staff who cheerfully engaged with the pupils while maintaining order and efficiency.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders are protected from bullying.(NMS 2)
- Boarders are protected from abuse.(NMS 3)
- Use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate.(NMS 4)
- Boarders' complaints are appropriately responded to.(NMS 5)
- The operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare (NMS 13)
- Boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school.(NMS 22)
- Boarders are protected from the risk of fire. (NMS 26)
- The welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school.(NMS 28)
- Boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities.(NMS 29)
- Boarders' personal privacy is respected.(NMS 37)
- There is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders.(NMS 38)
- 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.(NMS 39)
- Boarders have their own accommodation, secure from public intrusion. (NMS 41)
- Boarders are protected from safety hazards.(NMS 47)

The Commission considers Standards 2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

2,3,4,5,26,37,38,39,41,and 47

Quality in this outcome area is **Excellent**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The school has created an environment in which children may safely explore, learn and develop with confidence.

EVIDENCE:

Inspectors met with a number of small groups of boarders selected by year group and also had informal discussions during 12 different meal sittings. On each occasion the feedback from boarders confirmed there are no issues regarding bullying. When discussed as a topic in the group interviews all boarders were clear about the process for reporting any incidents of bullying and what the schools policy is regarding bullying. Boarders were clearly secure in their peer relationships and felt appropriately supported by the adults around them.

There were separate discussions with the Head of Boarding who also leads on Child Protection. The head of boarding was knowledgeable and had recently completed additional Boarding School Association Child Protection training. There was an opportunity to discuss the new Safeguarding Children reporting procedures, which the school is familiar with and also review the schools programme of Child Protection training for all staff.

Boarders were confident about raising any Child Protection issues and in addition to providing cascaded Child Protection training for staff a yearly report/review of Child Protection is provided to the governing body, to ensure they are appropriately informed of any issues.

The school has clear policies on how to manage antisocial behaviour, ensure an appropriate level of discipline and promote healthy group dynamics through the boarding experience. All boarding staff displayed a strong commitment to supporting and encouraging individuals, recognising their strengths and aspirations. Boarders felt punishments to be fair and proportionate, the focus of the school is to identify early any negative aspects of behaviour and provide extra support and guidance.

There is a comprehensive complaints policy and procedure in place, which is subject to scrutiny by the Board of Governors. In general complaints tend to be of a minor/informal nature and are resolved quickly. Parents are confident in the school and able to raise any concerns directly with the Matrons, Head of Boarding or the Headmaster.

The school operates a prefect system, however this was very clearly seen as a nurturing/supportive role and was very much valued by the younger boarders. Prefects were seen to have genuine regard for the welfare of boarders and were keen to ensure their boarding experience was positive. The younger boarders were full of praise for their prefects who they regarded as compassionate older siblings.

In discussions with the inspectors the boarders demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of fire safety, they confirmed there are regular fire drills and they knew what action to take when the alarm went off. There are contract arrangements in place for the recording, maintenance and frequent checking of fire safety equipment.

Observations made during the inspection demonstrated that boarding staff understood the need for privacy, they were able to carry out their supervisory duties in a discreet manner. Matrons in particular understood that individual boarders may from time to time wish to be alone or have some one to one attention; this was seen as valuable in itself and provided opportunities for reflection or personal support.

The school has robust policies for the recruitment and retention of staff, including gap Students. All statutory checks are completed prior to employment and there is a detailed induction programme. All staff including ancillary staff are fully briefed on the school's philosophy of boarding welfare and their role in supporting it.

The welfare and safety of boarders is considered as paramount and there are very well established arrangements in place for the supervision and monitoring of any visiting adults to ensure they do not have unauthorised access to boarders, boarding accommodation is set back from the main road and is not overlooked.

The school has an exemplary arrangement for the management of health and safety. An external contractor provides a full risk management service including audit, risk assessment and review. The risk assessment process is very detailed and where appropriate relies on photographic evidence to support any findings, the contractor provides an efficient response service to address any identified risks

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders have access to a range and choice of activities.(NMS 11)
- Boarders receive personal support from staff.(NMS 14)
- Boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination.(NMS 18)
- Boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands.(NMS 27)
- Boarders have satisfactory provision to study.(NMS 43)
- Boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas.(NMS 46)

The Commission considers Standards 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

14 and 18

Quality in this outcome area is **Excellent**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. All borders have the quality of access to exceptional levels of personal support.

EVIDENCE:

The school maintains a well-balanced curriculum, which directly enhances the quality of boarding. The daily routines ensure boarders are able to socialise, prepare for and enjoy lessons, take part in a wide range of sports and recreational activities and have some free time for play.

Boarders were keen to tell the inspectors how much they valued the opportunities available to them to learn new sports, skills, crafts and particularly Art and design. A much appreciated aspect of the school is the way in which artwork is displayed, younger boarders were clearly influenced by this which they saw as inspirational, yet attainable. The school is proud of its record in obtaining a high ratio of arts scholarships; the manner in which individual borders identified with the school's achievements is commendable.

There was no evidence of discrimination in any form found during the inspection, rather there was an established culture, which recognised equality and diversity and actively supported anyone with an identified need. The structure of the school day recognised the demands placed upon boarders and provided opportunities for short periods of play at key times.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school.(NMS 12)
- Boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families.(NMS 19)
- New boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in.(NMS 21)
- Boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school.(NMS 30)
- There are sound relationships between staff and boarders.(NMS 36)

The Commission considers Standards 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

12 and 19

Quality in this outcome area is **Excellent**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Boarders are encouraged to participate and contribute to the development of boarding welfare.

EVIDENCE:

The school has an excellent communication system both for reporting concerns and informing pupils and parents of key information and events. The daily assemblies provide opportunities for developing themes and reflecting on local, national and world events.

The school promotes the use of drama, which encourages pupils to have confidence in public speaking and developing a greater understanding of their subject matter.

Boarders in particular were proud of their role in the school council and saw it as a positive means of engaging with adults to achieve change and recognition of their unique perspective. The school is commended in relation to the management of the school council.

The school has a high ratio of flexi-boarding, this was regarded by staff and boarders as positive, enabling a greater number of children to experience boarding. The use of boarding buddies in particular and indeed the general support provided to new boarders insured that everyone was made to feel welcome, secure and had an enjoyable experience. When the number of boarders in a particular year group became low there was provision for appropriate movement to ensure no one was left on their own in a dormitory.

The atmosphere within the dormitories was excellent, boarders clearly enjoyed the contact they had with matrons and the opportunities to play games, continue with their artwork, leisure reading and just having fun. Many boarders said they preferred a boarding environment to being at home, adding, "I get to be with all my friends all the time" it's like one big sleepover"

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders' possessions and money are protected.(NMS 20)
- Boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation.(NMS 40)
- Boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation.(NMS 42)
- Boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities.(NMS 44)
- Boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day.(NMS 45)
- Boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school.(NMS 50)
- The welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted.(NMS 51)

The Commission considers Standard 51 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

These standards were not assessed during this inspection visit, there are no boarders placed in lodgings.

EVIDENCE:

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- A suitable statement of the school's principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff (NMS 1)
- There is clear leadership of boarding in the school.(NMS 8)
- Crises affecting boarders' welfare are effectively managed.(NMS 9)
- The school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare.(NMS 10)
- Risk assessment and school record keeping contribute to boarders' welfare.(NMS 23)
- Boarders are adequately supervised by staff.(NMS 31)
- Staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site.(NMS 32)
- Boarders are adequately supervised at night.(NMS 33)
- Boarders are looked after by staff with specific boarding duties, with adequate induction and continued training.(NMS 34)
- Boarders are looked after by staff following clear boarding policies and practice.(NMS 35)
- The welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

The Commission considers Standards 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

1,23,31,and 34

Quality in this outcome area is **Excellent**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The management systems within the school are exceptionally high.

EVIDENCE:

The school has a clear and detailed statement of boarding principles and practice, which is available to parents, boarders and staff. There is a child friendly version available to younger boarders. Matrons as a matter of routine explain in detail all relevant aspects of boarding and what the school expects in terms of behaviour, discipline and effort.

Boarding (flexi boarding) is regarded as a key aspect of the schools profile, the Head of Boarding is a member of the schools senior management team, able to contribute to the development of boarding and highlight any general welfare or Child Protection issues. In practice boarding welfare is very much a team effort and all members of staff play a crucial role in its success.

The school has a well-developed disaster planning policy and procedure and as stated elsewhere a comprehensive risk assessment process.

There are essentially two boarding groups, one for boys and one for girls though these groups are subdivided by year group. The organisation of boarding remains the same for boys and girls and is of a high standard.

Boarders told the inspectors they were always supported by adults and knew the whereabouts of matrons and other key staff, particularly during the night. The school has a two-way radio system for use when there are organised sports on the playing fields to ensure there is always communication with the sick bay facilities.

The school has an excellent system of induction, core training, supervision and appraisal for all boarding staff, including child protection training and boarding practice. In discussions with matrons they stressed the high level of support available to them and the team approach to boarding welfare.

Ancillary staff also feel part of the boarding welfare team, their role is clearly valued both by management and by boarders, some staff have devoted practically all of their working lives to the welfare of the young people in their care, for which they are commended.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

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

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
6	4
7	X
15	4
16	X
17	X
24	X
25	X
48	X
49	X

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	4
3	4
4	4
5	4
13	X
22	X
26	4
28	X
29	X
37	4
38	4
39	4
41	4
47	4

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
11	X
14	4
18	4
27	X
43	X
46	X

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	4
19	4
21	X
30	X
36	X

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
20	X
40	X
42	X
44	X
45	X
50	X
51	X

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

Continued

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	4
8	X
9	X
10	X
23	4
31	4
32	X
33	X
34	4
35	X
52	X

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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