



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Boarding School

Holmwood House School

Chitts Hill

Lexden

Colchester

Essex

C03 5ST

23rd and 24th February 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

Holmwood House School

Address

Chitts Hill, Lexden, Colchester, Essex, CO3 5ST

Tel No:

01206 574305

Fax No:

01206 768269

Email Address

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

Holmwood House School

Name of Head

Mr Henry Thackrah

NCSC Classification

Boarding School

Type of school

Independent

Date of last boarding welfare inspection

09/02/01

Date of Inspection Visit		23 rd and 24 th February 2004		ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		9.30 am		
Name of NCSC Inspector	1	Janet Ortega	072080	
Name of NCSC Inspector	2	Steve Briggs	075328	
Name of NCSC Inspector	3			
Name of NCSC Inspector	4			
Name of Boarding Sector Specialist Inspector (if applicable):		Tom James		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the NCSC. 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?				YES
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Mr H Thackrah, Headmaster		

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Boarding schools are subject to inspection by the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) to determine whether the welfare of children (i.e. 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 NCSC, 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 NCSC 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 NCSC in respect of Holmwood House 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.

Holmwood School is a co-educational independent school providing both day and boarding facilities for children aged four and a half years to thirteen and a half years. Those boarding are aged 8 years and above.

At the time of the inspection Holmwood provided both weekly and flexible boarding. The request for flexible boarding has increased considerably with a waiting list for some nights.

The boarding houses are within the school building; an old Victorian manor house.

The school is set in its own grounds on the outskirts of Colchester. Facilities available include playing fields, tennis courts, indoor swimming pool and gym.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL IN BOARDING WELFARE

All boarders spoken with said they enjoyed boarding. They also said boarding was one of the best experiences of being at the school. It was clear the demand for flexible boarding was high, particularly on certain nights, and on occasions exceeded availability.

The boarders spoke very highly of the activities provided. These were found to be varied, well organised and responsive to the needs of the children boarding at that time.

Generally the relationships between staff and children were very good. Some children, particularly, spoke very highly of the staff. It was also clear that the staff, and particularly the matron, were concerned for the well being of the children.

It was also evident during the inspection that staff were sensitive to individual needs, and had dealt with two recent difficult situations well. The children themselves commented on the memorial garden as a very positive development in the school.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO BETTER IN BOARDING WELFARE

The school needs to ensure that complete records of staff recruitment are kept. This includes the verification of personal references presented to the school.

The school should also review the child protection policy to ensure that one accessible policy exists. Further child protection training should be provided to staff.

The school should consider developing individual pupil welfare plans where there are particular welfare needs.

The school should also take steps to ensure there is adequate monitoring of records.

CONCLUSIONS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BOARDING WELFARE

This report is the first by the National Care Standards Commission under the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, and therefore serves as an audit of the school against the new standards, identifying developments needed to meet the new requirements within a reasonable period of time.

Both the children and staff team were helpful throughout the inspection process for which the inspectors would like to extend their thanks.

The school provided a very positive experience for children who board, and clearly one that was valued by the children themselves.

Key strengths of the boarding provision were the facilities and activities offered, as well as the relationships between the children and staff.

The school needs to ensure recruitment practices meet the National Minimum Standards. In addition some policies and procedures require further work.

NOTIFICATIONS TO LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY OR SECRETARY OF STATE

Is Notification of any failure to safeguard and promote welfare to be made by the National Care Standards Commission to the Local Education Authority or Department for Education and Skills under section 87(4) of the Children Act 1989 arising from this inspection?

NO

Notification to be made to: **Local Education Authority**
 Secretary of State

NO
NO

The grounds for any Notification to be made are:

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IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FROM LAST INSPECTION

Were the Recommended Actions from the last Inspection visit fully implemented?

YES

If No, the findings of this inspection on any Recommended Actions not implemented are listed below:

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 and any advisory recommendations 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	BS3	The child protection policies and procedures should be reviewed to ensure one policy and procedure exists.	1 st June, 2004
2	BS3	It is recommended the school review the Head's role as designated child protection officer with a view to another senior member of staff fulfilling this role.	1 st July, 2004
3	BS4	A written restraint policy should be developed.	1 st July, 2004
4	BS7	Records relating to the health and welfare of each child should be kept separately and not in one book.	1 st June, 2004
5	BS17	The school should develop welfare plans for children, particularly where there are specific emotional or behavioural difficulties.	1 st June, 2004
6	BS23	The school should improve the system for monitoring accidents, punishments and any complaints that may be received.	1 st July, 2004
7	BS34	Details of staff induction undertaken should be recorded on individual staff files.	1 st July, 2004
8	BS38	A recruitment procedure should be developed and fully implemented. This should include recording of interviews, taking up references and records of any verifications made of qualifications and personal statements for example.	1 st July, 2004

9	BS40	Although it is acknowledged the school has actioned repairs, the school should continue to monitor the effectiveness of the heating system and take any required corrective action as necessary.	1 st July, 2004
10	BS44	The school should review the privacy of the boarding facilities. This refers specifically to the boys shower and bathrooms, and the adequacy of the curtains at the windows in some of the dormitories.	1 st June, 2004

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	BS1	The statement of the school's boarding principles should be further developed to clearly identify the aim of boarding and how the aim is to be achieved.
2	BS5	The school may wish to identify thresholds as to what constitutes a complaint or concern about the services provided, as well as a system for recording parental concerns.
3	BS6	The school should expand its policy to include the school's response to a child who is found to be smoking, as well as including reference to alcohol and drug use.
4	BS9	The crisis management plan should be further progressed and finalised.
5	BS47	The school should continually review and risk assess the potential for access to the school by members of the public using the squash club.

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	NO

Checks with other Organisations and Individuals

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Services • Fire Service • Environmental Health • DfES • School Doctor • Independent Person or Counsellor • Chair of Governors 	YES
	YES
	YES
	YES
	YES
	YES
	NA
'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)	YES

Date of Inspection	23/02/04
Time of Inspection	9.30
Duration of Inspection (hrs.)	20.5
Number of Inspector Days spent on site	6

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 FROM

9

 TO

13

NUMBER OF BOARDERS (FULL TIME + WEEKLY) AT TIME OF INSPECTION:

Boys	14
Girls	2
Total	16
Number of separate Boarding Houses	1

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the NCSC 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)
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- 1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

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"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
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The school provides two guides to its boarding provision. One is entitled 'A Parents Guide to Boarding', and the other 'A Guide to Casual Boarding', both of which are made available to parents.

Both guides provided information as to the facilities and services available, staffing and the daily routine. Key policies and procedures were also included in the guides as appropriate, for example health care, complaints procedure and fire safety. Neither guide provided details as to the aim of boarding at 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?**

3

The school has a policy on countering bullying which is explained to parents. A copy of the document is also pasted into the children's diaries and was evident throughout the school, for example on notice boards. Bullying is also addressed with the children through the Personal, Health and Social Education (PHSE) syllabus.

The bullying policy provided a definition of bullying, and detailed action that may be taken in the event of bullying occurring.

Staff spoken with were aware of the contents of the policy, and reported any incidents would be dealt with promptly.

Parents commented positively on the school's approach to bullying.

Pupils spoken with knew about the pamphlet they had been given which covers this and other topics. Pupil questionnaires completed prior to the Inspection showed a wide range of people the children thought they could tell if they were worried about something. (See Standard 14).

PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS REPORTING NEVER OR HARDLY EVER BEING BULLIED

93.8

%

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

Guidance on child protection was available through a number of different documents within the school. No two written policies addressing child protection were exactly the same, however they provided staff with the correct information as to how to respond. As there were different documents produced at different times there was some room for confusion about the process that might be followed in the event of an incident, leaving the school vulnerable if something went wrong.

The Head acts as the designated child protection officer for the school.

Not all staff have received child protection training although information is available in the staff handbook. The independent listener has not received child protection training and said they would not know how to respond to allegations of abuse.

The school has a video produced by Essex Police which is shown to parents of pupils.

The school's internet access is protected, and the I.T. room is supervised at all times.

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?**

2

The school has a policy in respect of punishments, and staff interviewed were clear about the process for implementing the policy.

Any punishments which may be used were considered, by the inspectors, to be appropriate.

Records of any punishments are kept by the school.

The children spoken with were also clear of punishments that may be used in the school, including the use of detention. On the whole the boarders spoken to thought the sanctions were fair, although two out of the sixteen pupil questionnaires expressed the view that some staff were strict; it was unclear as to whether this referred to boarding staff. Parents may also be involved in any disciplinary process as necessary.

The school does not have a restraint policy but the Head was aware of the need to develop one.

The school has a system for acknowledging good behaviour, and the use of immediate verbal praise is reinforced through the staff handbook.

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
<p>The school has a complaints/concerns procedure which was available to parents/carers and boarders. The procedure did not contain the contact details of the National Care Standards Commission.</p> <p>A system to record any complaints received was in place but no entries had been made, as the inspectors were informed by the Headmaster that no complaints had been received.</p> <p>In discussion with the inspectors it was evident different staff may have a different understanding as to what might constitute a complaint and that some parents had made what were taken to be complaints.</p>		
Number of complaints, if any, received by NCSC 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?	2
<p>Issues relating to health education are addressed by the school. Health and bodily awareness forms part of the school curriculum.</p> <p>The school has a specific policy which addresses smoking, and drug and alcohol consumption were contained within the staff disciplinary procedures.</p> <p>The information available did not provide guidance to staff on how to respond should a pupil be found smoking, for example and did not cover drug and alcohol abuse.</p>		

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?****2**

Records relating to health and welfare were recorded in an 'events diary' and in a 'medical records' book. These were not kept in respect of each individual child. Information kept was detailed, and passed to the school G.P. as appropriate.

Emergency contact details were kept by the school.

Specific information relating to health care needs, for example allergies, was kept in a list which was provided to staff, including the Matron and the chef. However some pupil information was displayed somewhat publicly on walls in the Matron's office, which parents regularly visit. Although it is acknowledged this does promote ease of reference it does not promote privacy.

The Matron, who is clearly capable and dedicated, has a wealth of information about pupils medical and health needs but much of this is kept in her head, carrying the risk of important information being unavailable in the event of her being indisposed.

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?

2

The welfare of the children within the school is promoted. The boarding staff were seen to be dedicated and caring.

The Deputy Head is responsible for pastoral care within the school, however it was noted by the inspectors that there were no formal lines of accountability between the Housemaster, with responsibility for boarding, and Deputy Head. The Headmaster confirmed that the arrangement within the school is the boarding staff relate to the respective tutors, and there are no formal lines of accountability between the Deputy Head and boarding staff as the Deputy Head is a non resident member of staff.

It was evident that the boarding staff were concerned for the welfare of the children. However there was no formal system for monitoring the welfare provision within the school. The written communication systems are built around those in place for day pupils, which is understandable, however the good communication that appears to exist about boarders is very reliant on the time and energy of the Matron and Housemaster to channel welfare information across the shift pattern of the other boarding staff.

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**

At the time of the inspection the Headmaster was in the process of developing a crisis management plan, with significant work already completed.

The school has recently dealt with two serious issues affecting the welfare of the children.

It was evident the school was sensitive to the needs of all pupils on both occasions, and pupils welfare of paramount importance.

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**

The facilities of the boarding houses were satisfactory in terms of protection and separation of boarders by age and gender.

Both houses provided similar quality of provision.

Arrangements for the allocation of beds within dormitories were noted to be flexible, and some of the full time boarders spoken with said they were given a choice as to which dormitory they had.

In discussion with staff it was evident they were sensitive to the needs of the individual children when allocating dormitories.

There was evidence that the school took the issue seriously as sanctions were taken against pupils who breached the rules about segregation early in the year.

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
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The boarding and school day is organised so that there is sufficient free time for the children.

A range of after school activities are provided of which the children spoke very highly. Children have access to the gym, pool and computer room, as well as a recreational area when boarding. Activities offered in the evening and at breaks were noted during the Inspection to be appropriately supervised.

In the questionnaires completed by the boarders comments made included: 'the facilities are exquisite'. A number of children also identified the activities and facilities as being the good things about boarding. In discussion with them some of the children commented that they choose which activities they wished to take part in during the evening. All the children spoken to by the Inspectors were pleased with the variety and accessibility of activities.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.2)
Boarders have opportunity to contribute views to the operation of boarding provision.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The inspectors were informed by the Headmaster that the Housemaster usually meets formally with the boarders each half term.

The Housemaster has recently started to keep minutes of these meetings.

The children spoken with said that all but one issue raised with the boarding staff had been addressed. (That not addressed related to increasing the provision of squash to drink. Staff reported they were keen to promote healthy eating and therefore limit the amount of food and drink which contained additives.)

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?	9
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The school does not operate a prefect system.

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?****3**

The school has a leaflet entitled 'Someone to turn to' which provides children with information about who they can talk to if they feel worried or concerned in anyway. These included boarding house staff, the Headmaster or Deputy Head, school G.P. and an independent person.

In discussion with a number of boarders, the inspector was satisfied the children knew about who to turn to if necessary. The inspectors spoke to both of the Independent People nominated by the school as people to turn to in the pamphlet. These were the school doctor and the squash club manager (in adjacent premises), both of whom would be familiar figures to the children. The squash club manager displayed good common sense knowledge as to how to proceed should a child turn to her for guidance or with a personal problem.

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?

3

All weekly boarders are registered with the school doctor who visits weekly. The school doctor said he would also see casual boarders if necessary but would liaise with that child's G.P. as necessary. The school doctor and the boarding staff confirmed that there is a low threshold for children going home to their parents, i.e. the school does not seek to provide medical treatment for unwell boarders. If needed the Matron said she would take children to the school doctor's surgery.

The school does not have a school nurse but the Matron administers first aid as required. Two children with minor ailments were seen by the inspectors to be dealt with in a kindly way. Detailed written records, which are in turn summarised for the school doctor, are kept of any first aid administered.

The Matron keeps medication prescribed for the children in a locked cupboard. Some over the counter medication is also kept, but this is under the advice of the school doctor.

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
<p>A member of boarding staff, the Matron and a gap student, sleeps on each floor of the boarding houses at night.</p> <p>Staff reported that when a child is unwell they are usually collected promptly by their parents, and therefore the sick room is rarely used.</p> <p>The children asked were clear about how to summon help in the night if required.</p>		

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?	2
<p>Through discussions with staff, and particularly the Matron, it was evident they were aware of any specific health or emotional needs of the children. It was also evident staff responded appropriately and with sensitivity, for example by spending time with a child on a one to one basis in order they may talk about how they felt. Although support was available and provided as needed the school did not draw up welfare plans for the children.</p> <p>Again through discussion with the Matron it was clear they were sensitive to any homesickness the children may feel.</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?	3
<p>The school has both an anti-harassment policy as well as an equal opportunities policy, which specifically addresses staff recruitment.</p> <p>During the course of the inspection it was evident the school aims to support children of different backgrounds and abilities, for example children whose first language is not English.</p>		

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.6)		
Boarders are enabled to contact their parents and families in private.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>It was evident there is regular contact between the school and boarders. For example parents of flexible boarders saw the Matron on arrival on the morning of the day their child was due to board, and the parent of a weekly boarder visited during the evening of the first day of the inspection. The children asked also confirmed they were able to contact their parents without any problem.</p> <p>All of the children accommodated at the time of the inspection had their own mobile phones but for those who don't payphones, including one in a booth, are available in the boarding houses. An e-mail facility is also available to the children. Mobile phones are only available in the evening and have to be handed in to the Matron. From observations made, the inspectors did not think that this would prevent a child making contact with others as they needed.</p> <p>Details of helpline telephone numbers were evident throughout the school, and pasted in children's homework diaries.</p>		

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
<p>Lockable storage facilities were not available however the children spoken with said they were satisfied with the arrangements in place to safeguard their personal possessions.</p> <p>Mobile phones are looked after by the Matron during the course of the school day.</p>		

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>There is a booklet which is given to all new boarders. This explains the 'routine' of boarding and issues such as tuck, clothing, health care and the allocation of dormitories, amongst others. Copies of the leaflet were also evident on the notice boards in the school, including in the dining hall.</p> <p>A 'buddying' system is also in place for new boarders. Children spoken to by the inspectors had had experience of this, or were the buddy for newer pupils.</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
The school does not provide guardians.		

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?	2
<p>The Deputy Head has responsibility for undertaking risk assessments for trips. There was evidence of risk assessments for a forthcoming trip. This appeared to be robust, but minor improvements were suggested by the inspectors to ensure the assessments was reviewed and signed off. Risk assessments for previous trips in the UK and abroad were also seen. A related evaluation system will also be developed by the school.</p> <p>There was also a comprehensive risk assessment policy document for the school, for which the Bursar had responsibility. This covered relevant aspects in a clear and simple way.</p> <p>The school has a system to record accidents, although during the inspection it was noted one accident had not been recorded in the accident book.</p> <p>Records of punishments were kept. These were analysed and the sanctions were found to be reasonable and proportionate.</p> <p>The school did not have in place a system to monitor punishments or accidents, or complaints should any have been received.</p>		

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**

All of the children surveyed said the food was either average or above; with 37.5% reporting the meals provided to be very good.

The school operates a 4 weekly rotating menu; one for summer and one for winter. The chef advised that he meets annually with one of the proprietors to confirm the budget, and is then able to develop the menu accordingly. The chef confirmed he takes into account children's preferences.

It was evident through discussion with the chef there is an emphasis on healthy eating; fresh fruit is always available, and the chef attempts to introduce less popular vegetables into the menu by being creative in their use in the menu. The inspectors took two meals with the children in the evening and at breakfast. Both of these seemed to be enjoyed by the children and have a good impression of the diet. One child who was vegetarian said the food was fantastic. There was evidence of the cultural dietary needs of another child being met.

The school had addressed all but one requirement of the most recent environmental health officer's report. This related to the covering over the light fitment which the Head said he would follow up.

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**

Water fountains and taps were available, and accessible to the children, throughout the school and boarding houses.

The boarders are also able to have water by their bed at night should they wish.

In discussion with staff it was evident the school attempts to encourage children to drink plenty of water.

Fruit was available to boarders during the evening. A limited amount of tuck is also provided, to be purchased by children with a daily allowance each evening. This allowance can be 'lost' if sanctions are required for poor behaviour, for example not undertaking rostered chores such as wiping the dining tables after meals.

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?	3
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The boarders spoken with knew the fire evacuation procedure. They also confirmed there was a fire evacuation practice every term.

Fire evacuation notices were posted in the school and boarding houses.

It was noted a fire evacuation sign in one of the girls dormitories was obscured when the curtains were drawn, and there was limited lighting on the outside fire escape from the upper floors. It was advised the school consult the Fire Service about this.

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
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The inspectors saw no evidence that the school does not place any onerous demands on the children.

The children are expected to undertake some 'duties' when boarding, for example clearing away the tables after breakfast, collecting up laundry in the evening, and switching off lights in the cellar recreation area. These duties are posted in advance and are transparent.

The boarders have free time after prep which finishes at 6.10p.m. and depending on their age may stay up until 8.30p.m.. Comment has previously been made about the way the children value this time.

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?	9
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This standard is not applicable to Holmwood School.

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

See Standard 23. From the information available any trips out of the school were appropriately risk assessed and supervised.

An appropriate policy on school trips was available.

It was also evident that trips abroad, for example to France, were risk assessed.

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?**

9

The school very much sees itself as a community in itself, and does not actively participate in the neighbourhood nor allow children off site except for sporting or structured activities.

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
<p>There is a boarding staff handbook which clearly details the duties of boarding staff on duty. During the inspection it was evident there were sufficient numbers of staff for the numbers of children boarding. The roster included three gap year students, one of who was a former boarder. In discussion that person was confident about their role.</p> <p>Each activity available was supervised by a member of staff, with an additional member of staff patrolling the school grounds. Staff knew for which activity they were responsible.</p> <p>Comment was made to the inspectors that when there are large numbers of children boarding, towards the end of the week, it is necessary to request additional assistance from a live in member of staff, for example the Boarding Master, when getting the children to settle down to sleep.</p> <p>Arrangements were in place to cover staff sickness.</p> <p>The only concern of the inspectors about supervision of pupils and boarders was at night, in winter, as parents were arriving and departing, in the front driveway which gets congested and the area around the Squash Club, which has a 'blind corner'. See Standards 41.</p>		

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?	9
This standard is not applicable to Holmwood School.		

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
<p>The boarding houses are staffed by a Matron and a gap year student at night. A number of members of staff live on site including the Boarding Master. The Matron lives in the boarding house.</p> <p>Details as to which children were boarding each night were available. However there are a lot of comings and goings of flexible boarders each week and it requires a major effort to keep track of this by the staff.</p> <p>The children spoken with were aware of how to contact a member of staff during the night if they needed to.</p>		

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
<p>Job descriptions were available on the staff files inspected.</p> <p>Staff spoken with confirmed they had received an induction when starting at the school although no record, including details of the induction, were available on the files inspected.</p> <p>An annual appraisal is in place for staff.</p>		

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?	3
<p>A boarding staff handbook and staff handbook were available in the school.</p> <p>Guidance available to staff addressed child protection, bullying and punishments, for example.</p> <p>Staff spoken with, including gap year students, confirmed they received copies of the relevant handbooks.</p>		

Standard 36 (36.1 - 36.4) There are sound staff/boarder relationships.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>The relationships between the boarders and staff were noted, during the inspection, to be very good.</p> <p>Children spoken with during the inspection confirmed they liked all the staff. Their questionnaires were also positive with minor grumbles!</p> <p>Comments made through the survey used included: 'they are well cool', 'I really like them very much' and 'they are fun'. Two children commented that some staff were strict, and another that some staff have 'favourites'.</p>		

Standard 37 (37.1 - 37.2) Staff supervision of boarders should avoid intruding unnecessarily on boarders' privacy.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>During the course of the inspection the privacy of boarders was noted to be observed.</p> <p>Comment was made on two of the children's survey forms that they felt staff were 'nosey' at times.</p>		

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

The school's equal opportunities policy address, to an extent, the issue of recruitment. No other policy or procedure for staff recruitment was available in the staff handbook.

On the five staff files inspected DfES checks had been undertaken where possible. However some records of a safe recruitment process did not exist, for example on two files there were no or only one written reference. There were no interview records except for one person. The interview process was overly dependent upon the views of the Headmaster and a feeling of comfort with the applicant. This is an area of practice that needs tightening up to protect both the children and the otherwise good standard attained by the school in this welfare inspection.

The references/character statements for the gap students were available, however these had been provided directly by the gap students and there was no evidence they had been verified by the school.

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?

3

From the records inspected it was evident staff who had unsupervised access to the children had been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau.

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?

2

The accommodation for boarders was clean and decorated to an adequate standard. The furniture was in a good state of repair.

Rooms were adequately lit and ventilated.

A number of children, through the survey and in discussion with the inspectors, commented they found the dormitories cold. Others commented they found their dormitory warm enough. The inspectors noted that some parts of the sleeping accommodation (in February) were chilly, and others warm. This was said to be in the nature of the heating system. Clearly in an old building on three floors replacing the system would be disruptive and very costly. The Bursar reported that there is a ten year plan within which this is under consideration. One shower room was noted not to have any heating.

Some children commented that in one dormitory the curtains at the window afforded limited privacy, even when closed.

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**

The accommodation provided for boarders was generally sufficiently protected from access by the public. However there is Squash Club adjacent to the boarding house well within the school grounds, which is accessed by the public during the day and at night. Parents also use the car park of this facility to collect day pupils at the end of the school day, as reportedly use the Squash Club at around that time. It was clear to the inspectors however that the congestion of the front drive was an additional reason for the use of the 'rear entrance'. There are a range of risk aspects:

- Members of the Squash Club are not given any information as part of their membership about keeping away from the children (in the school not in the club).
- Although it was reported by the Headmaster and Squash Club Manager that access to the club is via an entrance on the opposite side to the school and boarding house, two persons were seen by the inspectors to access the entrance to the Club which overlooks the dining hall and boarding house. One of these went across the school grounds to do so.
- A third person was seen to be in a distressed state sitting on a bench immediately below the bedroom windows and outside the dining hall.
- All of three of these people at night could see what the inspector saw of children at curtains.
- After dark the external lighting at the sides of the Squash Club is reasonable, but at the 'school end' of the premises overlooking the playground, it was relatively dim. This area contains entry and access to both the Squash Club directly, and the car park used by Members and parents.
- In this area children have to take a 90 degree turn round building walls to traverse the passage to the car park and are then out of sight. One child who was 'signed out' at the front entrance of the school, was seen by the inspector to return into school buildings unseen by an adult via this route at the rear.
- It was imaginable that an intruder could make use of the general hustle and too-ing and fro-ing at pick up time or at a quieter time could gain relatively easy entry to the school.

This was discussed with Headmaster who advised that advice had been sought from a Squash Club member who is a Child Protection Officer about safety. However it is recommended that the risks identified in this inspection are again reviewed and further advice on crime prevention taken if necessary.

The school has a visitors policy, which was noted to be implemented during the course of the inspection.

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

There was adequate separation between the girls and boys dormitories, and the dormitories were personalised.

Children brought with them their own duvets, but clean bedding was also noted to be readily available.

The dormitories had sufficient storage space and were adequately furnished. Rooms were not overcrowded and there was sufficient space for changing.

Comments were made to the inspectors, through both the surveys and in discussion, that the beds were too narrow and short for some pupils.

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

Prep is undertaken by both day pupils and boarders together before the end of the school day.

Ample facilities were available within the school library.

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
<p>Separate bath and shower facilities were available for both male and female boarders. The facilities were noted to be clean, and are cleaned every day. At the time of the inspection the facilities available were adequate for the numbers of children boarding, however it was not possible to assess the adequacy of the facilities when the boarding house is operating at full capacity.</p> <p>At the time of the inspection the hot water temperature was found to be adequate, although comment was made on one survey form that there have been problems with the hot water supply. This had been addressed by the school.</p> <p>Through the survey some children commented they found the privacy of the bathrooms to be poor, particularly the baths/showers. The doors to the showers in the boys boarding house were noted to be clear, and therefore affording no privacy. There was no curtain or blind at the window in one of the shower rooms.</p>		

Standard 45 (45.1 - 45.3) Suitable changing provision is provided for use by day.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The school provides adequate changing facilities for boarders.</p> <p>Boarders do not use their dormitory for changing during the school day.</p>		

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?	3
<p>The children have access to a range of recreational areas, both indoor and outdoor, during their free time.</p> <p>This includes the gym; computer room, games area, and outside play areas. The school swimming pool is also available some evenings.</p> <p>There is no separation of gender or age groups in the areas provided however this was not raised as a concern by any of the children in the survey or in discussion.</p>		

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

A health and safety policy was available within the staff handbook.

A range of risk assessments, which had been 'signed off' by the Head, was available.

Windows were fitted with restrictors as appropriate.

Situated within the school grounds is public squash club. The Headmaster informed the inspectors that the Community Safety Officer and Child Protection Officer within the police had reviewed the access arrangements.

See Standard 41.

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?**

3

A sick room, separated from the dormitories, is available within the boarding house, although staff reported this was rarely used. If a child becomes unwell staff contact the parents who then collect their child.

The school doctor confirmed he considered the existing arrangements were adequate to meet the needs of the children.

Standard 49 (49.1 - 49.3) Adequate laundry provision is made for boarders' clothing and bedding.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Between them the Matron and a laundry person attend to the laundry.</p> <p>There is an established routine for laundering clothes and bedding, some of which is sent to a laundry service outside of the school.</p> <p>The children spoken with said they felt the laundry system worked well.</p>		

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?	9
<p>This standard is not applicable to Holmwood School.</p>		

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
<p>This standard is not applicable to Holmwood School.</p>		

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?	3
<p>It was reported to the inspectors and confirmed by records seen that any off site accommodation used is checked by the school beforehand.</p>		

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

[Empty box for Lay Assessor's Summary]

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

Lead Inspector Janet Ortega **Signature** _____

Second Inspector Steve Briggs **Signature** _____

Locality Manager John Hawkins **Signature** _____

Date 07 July 2004

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 23rd and 24th February 2004 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

The Head's comments are available at the Area Office.

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

Amendments to the report were necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments were received from the Head	<input type="checkbox"/>
Head's comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 15th June 2004, 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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan was received at the point of publication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan covers all the recommended actions in a timely fashion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action plan did not cover all the recommended actions and required further discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Head has declined to provide an action plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <enter details here>	<input type="checkbox"/>

D.3 HEAD'S AGREEMENT

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

D.3.1 I Stuart Thackrah of Holmwood House School 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 _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of _____ 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 _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

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.