

Skegness Grammar School

Inspection report for Boarding School

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Inspector	Monica Farrimond
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Head/ Principal	
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Date of last inspection	01/10/2007

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Skegness Grammar School (SGS) is a co-educational, selective school based in the town of Skegness. SGS caters for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years and there are 719 pupils in the school of whom 47 are boarders. Boarding provision was introduced to the school in 1994. The boarding house is an Edwardian country house set in parkland and is known as Wainfleet Hall. Wainfleet Hall is located in the nearby town of Wainfleet five miles from the school. There are regular, daily train services that provide transport to and from the boarding house and the school. Additionally the house has its own mini bus.

Summary

The overall quality rating is inadequate - notice of action to improve.

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

At this announced inspection all key boarding school standards were inspected. The school were given five days notice of the inspection and senior management co-operated fully in the inspection process. There are positive aspects of boarding life at the school, and generally the pupils are happy and enjoy the boarding experience. The boarding accommodation is homely and comfortable and the pupils are cared for by caring, committed house parents. The positive aspects are over shadowed by a serious failure to meet the national minimum standards for boarding schools, with shortfalls relating to many aspects, including staffing and safeguarding. This does not enhance the safety of the boarders.

The school has been managed by an acting headteacher for the last three months following the retirement of the previous headteacher. A new headmaster has been appointed and takes up his post shortly. Serious concerns identified during the inspection were brought to the immediate attention of the acting headteacher, and several issues were addressed prior to formal feedback being given to the senior management team and governors. A total of twenty recommendations are made following this inspection, which reflect mainly on poor management and procedures rather than inadequacies within the boarding staff.

Improvements since the last inspection

There has been a worrying deterioration in relation to boarding practice and management oversight. Information is now available to boarders and parents on discipline, punishments and the complaint process. Five of the nine previous recommendations have been addressed; these related to obtaining boarders views, monitoring of sanctions, identifying any bullying issues and fire safety. Issues relating to safe recruitment practice, safeguarding training, and monitoring of risk assessments are reiterated in this report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

The health needs of boarders are not well met by staff at the school; staff involved in the care of the pupils do not have appropriate training in administration of medication or care of boarders who are ill. Boarders are not always able to keep medical appointments at the local health centre, owing to poor staff ratios. There are members of staff on duty who are qualified to administer first aid, but this qualification is not sufficient to care for pupils who are ill, including the safe administration and recording of medication. Suitable policies and procedures relating to administration of both prescribed and non-prescribed medication are in place, but staff are not aware of the contents of the policies and procedures, and recordings of administration of non prescribed medication are not consistent and accurate records are not kept. This does not promote good health for the pupils and is not good practice. Arrangements to care for boarders who are ill are not adequate; records do not identify or support boarders' health needs, and it is not always possible to determine why boarders require treatment or administration of prescribed medication. This can lead to pupils not receiving appropriate medication and impact negatively on a pupil's welfare.

The boarders enjoy good quality meals with a strong emphasis on healthy nutrition. Fruit is plentiful and there are choices available each meal time. Any special diets are provided for. The school has a food committee which has representation from boarders. This group meets periodically with the cook to discuss any aspect of food and changes to the menu. This means that boarders have an influence on choices and preferences regarding meals. It is evident that boarders are provided with good quality meals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Safeguarding procedures have not always been fully understood; training in safeguarding has not taken place for all staff, which has serious implications for the welfare of the pupils. This does not ensure boarders welfare and safety is fully prioritised. Further statutory safeguarding training is planned for all staff.

Health and safety in the boarding accommodation is not good. Appropriate risk assessments are not in place to ensure the safety of boarders when out of school activities and trips are organised. There is no formal supervision of boarders on their journey by train from the boarding accommodation to and from the school premises, and the risks of accidents or poor behaviour are high. Fire safety equipment in all boarding houses have up to date checks confirming that these are in working order. The safety of boarders in relation to fire hazards is given a high priority and regular fire evacuation drills are carried out each term. This ensures that everyone is familiar with the actions to take in the event of a fire.

Records show that arrangements in place for the recruitment and selection of staff are poor. All staff have an enhanced criminal records check to promote the safe care for boarders, but major shortfalls were evident in other areas of the recruitment process, for example no references from previous employers. This does not ensure that staff employed at the school are suitable to work in positions of trust.

Boarders are protected by arrangements for the management of visitors to the boarding house. Boarders report most visits needed for maintenance work happen when they are in school. Although written guidance is not available, staff are clearly aware of their roles and responsibilities when visitors are present. Specific arrangements are in place for the house parent or bursar to supervise visitors if boarders are present. The visitor's book is detailed and evidences only necessary visits happen. Boarders safety is promoted through security measures in the boarding house. CCTV and door codes provide external security. Signs are on display to clarify actions to take if unknown people are in the grounds, the house parent takes prompt action.

Boarding house staff are committed to protecting boarders from bullying. Staff are aware of the policies and the actions to take if they suspect bullying, including cyber bullying. Boarders do not see bullying as an issue, and voiced confidence in all staff to take appropriate action should a bullying situation arise. Records support appropriate actions taken by the school when bullying was identified or reported. Overall addressing bullying is taken seriously and there is a strong commitment from senior management to ensure that any issues are promptly addressed.

Sanctions are clearly understood and mainly considered fair; boarders are aware of the rules and what sanctions can be received for misbehaviour; very few sanctions are given to the pupils, staff endeavour to reward good behaviour, and good relationships were observed between staff and boarders during the inspection.

Overall the need for boarders privacy is recognised and respected, for example, staff knock on bedroom doors.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Boarders report a variety of people they would seek support from, such as friends, house parents, and tutors. House staff and tutors are knowledgeable about boarders needs, but poor staffing ratios do not ensure that staff have sufficient time to give individual guidance or support to the pupils.

There is no inappropriate discrimination identified amongst staff or pupils. Overseas boarders are supported through a guardian scheme which is organised by parents independently of the school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Positive systems are in place to consult with young people; the school council enables boarders to express common concerns about boarding or food. In addition to these formal groups, boarders can speak to house staff on a daily basis if they have any issues to raise.

The boarders are encouraged to maintain contact with their families. The school is supportive towards pupils maintaining family and parental contact and there is ample provision for them to make and receive private telephone calls. They also maintain contact by email, letters and the use of personal mobile telephones.

Handbooks are given to all new boarders which gives information useful to boarders. These are not child friendly and age related. A buddy system is in place, for older pupils to give advice and guidance to new pupils, but this responsibility extends to supervision of the new pupils on the journey to and from the boarding house to school, and risk assessments have not been undertaken to ensure that safe practice is followed.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is inadequate.

Sufficient toilets and showers meet the standards, however, toilet and bathroom facilities are shared by pupils with widely different ages. Accommodation provided for boarders is bright, comfortable and feels homely, and is satisfactorily divided for genders. Communal areas are smart and child friendly, for example, the games room and small sitting area, these have a modern, contemporary feel. A television room with a large plasma screen and newly covered seats is in place for 'movie nights'. A caretaker is employed and this ensures regular daily maintenance tasks are completed, for example, replacing toilet seats. There are no lodging arrangements to consider.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The school prospectus, boarding policies, complaints and contracts outline the relevant information for parents in respect of boarding. Some details in the documents are out of date due to staff changes including a newly appointed headmaster. Boarders are clear on the expectations within boarding and can explain these thoroughly.

A governors' boarding committee is held regularly and minutes evidence that matters, such as policies, security and staffing are discussed. Governor visits have taken place to the boarding house and the acting head teacher has completed

checks of boarding records. Monitoring of the relevant records is inadequate. Shortfalls in record keeping and detail in the risk assessments have not been identified by this monitoring. Management checks of boarding have not included actions to meet the shortfalls in record keeping or identified the inappropriate recruitment checks. These issues impact on the safety of the pupils accommodated.

The promotion of Equality and Diversity is inadequate. Management of every outcome area fails to meet the needs of both staff and pupils; including serious safeguarding concerns relating to recruitment and lack of training.

Supervision levels of pupils are inadequate to meet the needs and promote the pupil's welfare. Boarding staff are committed and caring, but show signs of exhaustion with current inadequacies in staffing levels. Staff appraisals are not being carried out on boarding staff, therefore appropriate training needs are not identified and met.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

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

- ensure there are effective arrangements to secure medical, dental and optical attention for boarders as necessary (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that the school has secured, and follows, qualified medical or nursing advice in a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription "household" medicines to boarders (NMS 15.9)
- ensure that a written record (separate from NHS records) is kept of all medication, treatment and first aid administered to boarders giving name, date, medication/treatment, reason for administration (if not prescribed), which is signed by a responsible member of staff and is regularly monitored by an appropriate designated senior member of staff (NMS 15.12)
- ensure that boarders are able to summon staff assistance readily and rapidly when ill, by day and night (NMS 16.3)
- ensure that staff at all levels, including newly appointed and ancillary staff have been given briefing or training on responding to suspicions or allegations of abuse and know what action to take in response to such suspicions or allegations (NMS 3.5)
- ensure that the school's policy and practice explicitly require staff to report to a designated senior member of staff of the school or to Ofsted, any concern or allegation about school practices or the behaviour of colleagues which are likely to put pupils at risk of abuse or other serious harm
- ensure senior pupils given positions of responsibility over other pupils are briefed on appropriate action to take should they receive any allegation of abuse (NMS 3.8)

- ensure that the school's system for recruiting staff (including ancillary staff, contract/sessional staff and volunteers) who will work with boarders includes all the checks identified in NMS 38 before appointment, which can be verified from recruitment records
- ensure the school has an effective system of risk assessments, with written records (including consultation with boarders) to identify and reduce risk to boarders from inherent hazards (NMS 49.9)
- ensure that new boarders are given suitable information about boarding routines and rules, including key information in writing (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that each boarder has a suitably secure accessible place to keep personal possessions and valuables (NMS 20.3)
- ensure sleeping accommodation is suitably furnished, with appropriate separation between genders, age groups and from accommodation for adults (NMS 42.1)
- ensure that toilet facilities in boarding houses are not inappropriately shared by boarders of widely different ages(e.g. the most senior and most junior boarders), showering and bathing facilities are not shared by boarders of widely different ages (NMS 44.9)
- ensure the boarding statement of purpose is up to date and reflects staff changes (NMS 1.3)
- ensure that sleeping areas, recreational areas, toilet and bathroom provision are reasonably separated for boarders of significantly different ages (NMS 10.5)
- ensure the levels of staff supervision are satisfactory in number, and staff competence for the number, age and nature of the boarder population (NMS 31.2)
- ensure that all staff receive regular review of their boarding practice, with continuing opportunities for continuing training in boarding (NMS 34.1)
- ensure opportunities are provided for training and updating in boarding practice (including guidance on child protection issues) for all staff, including new and experienced staff (NMS 34.7)
- ensure that the headmaster, 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. (NMS 23.1).