

Swanbourne House School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Muhammed Harunur Rashid
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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

Swanbourne House is a day and boarding preparatory school for boys and girls, situated in the village of Swanbourne in Buckinghamshire, close to the towns of Milton Keynes and Aylesbury. The school is run by joint headteachers. The school provides a flexible range of boarding options for both boys and girls, including termly, weekly and more casual overnight boarding for pupils who might usually attend on a day basis. Boarding accommodation is located on the first and second floors of the main school building. Day-to-day supervision and management of boarding arrangements are primarily undertaken by the boarding house parents who are a married couple who live in accommodation that is adjacent to boarding areas. The school is located in a quiet rural setting with large grounds and playing fields surrounding it. The school has a pre-preparatory department on the same site, as well as pre-school provision.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was a full inspection conducted with one week's notice. It assessed how well the school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools and how it has addressed the recommendations made at the previous inspection.

The boarding provision of this school is outstanding. Pupils' welfare is very well promoted. The general practice of the school creates a safe and secure environment for the boarders. Boarders feel that they are safe and well looked after by the dedicated staff team. Boarders' health care needs are well identified through the admission process and these needs are well met. There is an excellent emphasis on promoting a healthy lifestyle for boarders. They have a lot of opportunities to participate in a wide range of engaging activities that support individual learning needs, goals and interests. There is an emphasis on building relationships between the school, boarding house, parents and pupils to ensure that the boarders enjoy a very positive experience. Boarding is very well organised by the boarding house parents who successfully promote a family-like atmosphere in the boarding settings.

One good practice recommendation has been made in relation to publicising Ofsted's details in the parents' guide, to facilitate contact where necessary.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection conducted on 28 February 2008 three recommendations were made in relation to: completing a risk assessment for staff who commence work prior to all required checks; making sure that parents are provided with information about

Ofsted; and developing a more child-friendly guide. The school has acted upon all these recommendations.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils benefit from a well-established provision for promoting their health care needs in full. There is an excellent system in place for conducting pupils' health care assessments during admission to the school. Relevant policies and guidance are in place to ensure likely health risks for pupils are fully addressed. A comprehensive programme is delivered by teaching staff and by informal day-to-day advice offered to pupils by pastoral, boarding, nursing and teaching staff.

The school provides an excellent level of nursing cover throughout the school week. Pupils by referral, have access to a children's counsellor. However the majority of counselling takes place with pastoral, boarding, nursing and teaching staff, some of whom have medical training, degree level study or BSA unit qualifications in guidance and counselling. This General Practitioner also runs a surgery at school every Friday. Where pupils have more complex health care needs, individual care plans are devised to meet these assessed needs. Care plans summarise pupils' health care needs, and support plans are in place to address these. Care plans are reviewed by the school nurses each term. Pupils interviewed and those who completed Ofsted surveys confirm that they are well looked after by the medical staff if they become ill or have suffered any injuries.

Medication is stored in the surgery where nurses are based. A pharmacist visits the school regularly and checks the medication administration, storage and disposals records. The school nurse advised the inspector that all recommendations made by the pharmacist are met.

The school ensures that staff attend health and safety, first aid, medication administration, food hygiene and manual handling training. The school has good facilities for caring for pupils when they are ill and need to stay at the school, and there are appropriate contingency plans in place to cope with any major outbreaks of illness among boarders.

There is an excellent emphasis on promoting a healthy life style for pupils. They have lots of opportunities for physical activities. Pupils are provided with varied, healthy and high quality meals. There is always a choice, and vegetarian options are always available. The school pass significant information about individual pupil's dietary needs to catering staff and these are catered for well. Pupils are provided with suitable quantities of food over the course of the day and have access to drinking water across the school site.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils are well protected by the school's child protection systems, providing a safe and secure environment. A comprehensive child protection policy and procedure is in place and this is kept under constant review. All staff, including volunteers and gap students, receive early child protection training to develop their knowledge and skills in this area. The school has designated members of staff who take the lead on safeguarding matters and they regularly meet to address any issues of concerns. The school has built good links with Buckinghamshire County Council's Local Authority Designated Officer for safeguarding and the Local Safeguarding Children Board and call them if they have any concerns. Pupils who completed Ofsted surveys indicated that they feel safe living in the boarding house.

The school has an up-to-date anti-bullying policy in place. Pupils' surveys received by Ofsted indicate that all pupils either strongly agree or agree that, 'there is no bullying taking place in the boarding house'. Parents' surveys also indicate that their children never experience any bullying in the boarding house. Pupils spoken to informed the inspector that they are very happy living here and are well cared for by the boarding staff. Staff monitor relationships between pupils closely and there is excellent communication between the school and boarding house so that if there are any concerns these are addressed promptly.

The school has an appropriate policy in place for safeguarding pupils from potential harm that can be caused through internet access. The school also offers e-safety guidance to parents to protect their children by arranging an e-safety briefing. The headteachers advised the inspector that 120 parents have attended their e-safety briefing.

There is a complaints procedure in a suitable format for pupils. The procedure is displayed in the premises. Pupils and parents have access to the complaints procedure, which includes Ofsted's address and telephone number. However, the headteachers of the school agreed with the inspector that including a summary of the complaints procedure and Ofsted's contact address and telephone number in the parents' guide would be beneficial to all relevant parties. Central complaints records are kept by the headteachers which indicate that parental concerns are listened to and dealt with reasonably. Eighteen pupils spoken to informed the inspector that boarding staff and teachers listen to their concerns.

The school has an appropriate behaviour policy. The deputy head of pastoral care, who has a lead on anti-bullying and sanctions, informed the inspector that pupils are generally well behaved. There is very little use of sanctions, and these are in the form of time out. All sanctions are appropriately recorded and information is passed on to the house parents. Records show that staff have not applied any restraint in the boarding house for many years.

The school premises and accommodation provide a safe and secure environment for

pupils. Boarders benefit from suitable levels of privacy. Personal information on boarders is kept secure and confidential. Boarding accommodation is kept secure from intrusion and clear procedures are in place for locking up and security checking of the broader areas of school accommodation at night-time. Clear procedures are in place for managing visitors and minimising the likelihood of unsupervised contact with boarders. The school has a thorough approach to the identification, assessment and management of potential risks to staff and pupils, on and off the school site. A range of formal risk assessments is maintained and reviewed and regular checks of the safety of the living and working environment are undertaken. Repairs and maintenance tasks are undertaken promptly.

There is a robust recruitment policy and procedure in place to protect pupils from abuse. The school maintains a single central register. Personnel records sampled show the relevant checks have been carried out and include identity checks, proof of qualifications, right to work in the United Kingdom, and Criminal Records Bureau disclosures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils enjoy an excellent level of individual support provided by the overall pastoral structures operating within the school day and additionally by the direct advice, support and care given by the boarding and nursing staff. Pupils view school staff as very helpful and approachable and are clear they can talk with any member of staff they see as most suitable. There are very good systems in place for staff to share information about any boarders around whom there may be welfare concerns. The school has appointed independent listeners, and boarders spoken to informed the inspector that they know how to contact them.

Pupils benefit from the opportunity to participate in a wide range of engaging activities that support individual learning needs, goals and interests. Activities that are arranged are carefully planned and consider the individual needs of each child taking part. Activities include a wide range of on-site sporting opportunities, school clubs and societies, simple games, and camps in the school's extensive grounds. Indoor games include television and watching DVDs. The school also arranges trips over the weekends for termly boarders. The school ensures that all play and recreation areas are kept safe and secure. They are subject to regular checking and risk assessment and areas of high risk are suitably supervised by staff.

The school values equality and diversity. There are clear policies and practices around anti-discriminatory approaches, and valuing and respecting diversity. There is a culture of open and effective communication between staff and pupils. The school publishes a 'culture shock' magazine which aims to achieve more through exposure to culture. The school arranges a theme day every month. There is scope for pupils to celebrate other religions and specific dietary needs are addressed. The school arranges international education lectures for pupils to broaden their knowledge and awareness about other countries and their cultures. Swanbourne House celebrated

its 90th anniversary in 2010. The celebration was observed by pupils, school staff, governors and parents.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There is an emphasis on building relationships between the school, boarding house, parents and pupils to ensure that the boarders enjoy a very positive experience. The boarding house staff encourage boarders to contribute to the operation of the boarding house. Excellent attention is paid to the views of boarders as part of the school's overall ethos of listening to pupils. Pupils spoken to and those who completed Ofsted surveys indicated that staff listen to their concerns.

The quality of caring relationships is excellent. Staff interaction with pupils is very warm and genuine. The house parents' extended family approach is clearly successful and massively appreciated by the pupils in boarding, particularly those who board more substantively.

The school makes very good provision to enable pupils to maintain contact with their parents. There are telephones in the boarding house exclusively for the use of boarders. They are permitted to use mobile phones during designated periods and allowances are made to the boarders whose parents live abroad. Boarders are able to send and receive letters in private. However, this is obviously less of an issue for casual boarders. Parents and family are free to phone or visit at all reasonable times.

Boarders are well supported in their introduction to boarding. They find staff are helpful and supportive in the more difficult early stages of boarding and also confirm they get a lot of help from older boarders to get over initial homesickness. A 'frequently asked questions' sheet is being developed by boarding house parents to inform parents and boarders about boarding expectations and routines.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The area known as the boarding house is entirely self-contained within the original building of the school. There are exclusive and shared areas available to boarders to maintain their privacy. Boarders are genuinely happy with the accommodation provided for them. The boarding house provides accommodation of a good standard which is well furnished and well maintained. Boarders have personalised their dormitories with various pictures and posters of their choices.

A rolling programme of redecoration is in place for the boarding areas. All dormitories are carpeted, centrally heated and provide natural light. There is an appropriate separation by age and gender with boys' and girls' accommodation on separate floors.

The school ensures the welfare of the boarders through making them secure from public intrusion. Boarders' sleeping areas are for the exclusive use of boarders, as are their living areas. The location and sufficient security measures prevent unauthorised access by the public to the boarding house.

Toilets and washing facilities are provided in sufficient numbers and are of a good standard. The girls' changing areas have been extended recently to provide more space for them as girls' numbers have been increased in the recent years. The premises are very clean and hygienic.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The boarding school has excellent and up-to-date documentation and information for parents and pupils that outlines the ethos and operation of the boarding provision. All information is available either in writing or on the school website. The school staff worked very hard to update all their policies and procedures in April 2011. Policies and procedures are comprehensively written and these provide an accurate picture of the way in which boarding is provided and boarders' welfare is promoted. The boarding provision is very well managed by the designated house parents, housemasters and housemistress with effective oversight provided by the school's joint headteachers and the governing body.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. School documentation displays a clear commitment to providing equal opportunities and to tackling discrimination in any form. The school provides an inclusive environment within which respect and consideration for others is promoted and where pupils learn about respecting differences, and about other cultures and religions. Pupils feel part of the village community by participating in their community activities. A comprehensive personal, social and health education programme and community service programme contribute remarkably to the promotion of diversity and appreciation of differences.

The school works hard to exceed the national minimum standards and ensure that the best outcomes for boarders are achieved in line with the aspirations of the Every Child Matters governmental framework for services for children. The school has very good systems of monitoring and oversight of all key areas of practice and safety relating to boarders' welfare, either by the headteachers or by identified senior staff members. Appropriate action is taken in relation to any concerns arising from the monitoring. The school has a well-developed structure of responses to foreseeable crises that might impact on boarders' welfare.

All boarding staff have clear job descriptions and they are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. Newly appointed staff complete a programme of induction which equips them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively. The staff group communicates very effectively and operates extremely well as a team. Training opportunities for professional development are very good.

The school ensures high levels of staff are on duty to support boarders during evening and weekend periods and are available overnight. Staff on duty have ready access to additional support from the resident house parents, and from other staff living on the school site. Boarders feel there are ample numbers of staff available to them at all times and are confident of where to find staff during night-time periods. Careful attention is paid to ensuring activities and events, both on and off the school site, are satisfactorily supervised by staff. More lengthy trips away from school, or abroad, are subject to a rigorous process of risk assessment.

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...

- include Ofsted's contact address and telephone number in the parents' guide should they wish to contact Ofsted in its role as external regulator of the boarding welfare. (NMS 5)