

More House School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

More House School is an independent Catholic foundation school, occupying a large self-contained site in a rural setting on the borders of Frensham Common, Surrey. It is open to boys of any faith, aged eight to 18. The school has 425 male pupils with residential accommodation for up to 106. At the time of the inspection there were 104 boarders aged from 10 to 18.

The school provides individualised learning programmes for boys who have specific learning difficulties and/or social communication/speech and language difficulties within the average range of ability. These programmes are devised from a detailed, structured curriculum which incorporates a whole-school approach.

Day, weekly and full boarding places are provided. Boarding facilities are split between the juniors in the Main House and the seniors in St Anthony's. The Main House, located on the first floor of the main school building, is split into seven dormitories, the largest accommodating nine boarders and the smallest accommodating two boarders.

More House is registered and inspected by Crested (The Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils). It appears in the Crested category of 'SP' Schools. It is also a member of the Independent Schools' Association and the Boarding Schools' Association.

The last inspection took place in June 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness is outstanding. The leadership and management of the residential provision are excellent, providing clear communication of the headteacher's high expectations to all staff and boarders. Parents describe the head of school as, 'a visionary head', and the head of boarding as, 'excellent and very caring.' Boarders make exceptional progress, aided by the highly efficient cross-department working within the school. Parents are fully engaged in the activity of the school and can track their child's progress on the shared database. The school celebrates the achievements of all boarders and invites parents, governors and friends to share in these celebrations. Young people say that relationships with staff and other boarders are excellent. One parent said, 'the school allows the young people to realise their true capabilities, staff bring them on to be the best they possibly can be. Young people are provided with all they need to succeed.'
- The school has developed fantastic facilities which they superbly maintain and use to the benefit of the boarders. Boarders engage in a stimulating and all encompassing range of activities which help maintain their health and develop their confidence and positive social skills.
- Boarders are fully engaged in decision making within the school. They actively participate in the school council and the food monitoring group which effect major changes in the school. Examples provided by the boarders include changes to staff working times to further enhance the activities, and significant changes to the menu to provide more healthy options.
- All staff are actively engaged in a consistent way of working with the boarders. The Learning Development Centre staff, who are all trained therapists, set clear

achievable targets for all boarders in support of their education targets. The therapists support these targets with very explicit guidelines to staff on how to communicate them to the young people. The shared access to the online database enables all staff to understand the current approach with every boarder and to track their progression. The therapists say, 'the emotional and social development of these young people is possibly more important than the educational progression.'

- Care at the residential provision is excellent. There are excellent pastoral arrangements and resources to support boarders' academic and personal development. One young person said, 'staff are excellent, they are really human and treat us as humans. They are very kind and we can talk to them about anything.'
- Safeguarding is outstanding, with policies and procedures demonstrating good practice guidelines from the local authority. The school has developed excellent education programmes for pupils and staff, promoting protection from online exploitation. Staff share this training with other schools, in line with safeguarding best practice guidance.
- The school has developed many areas of excellence in ways of engaging boarders in learning, in both the classroom and the residential setting. Staff ensure consistency of delivery to young people by the use of seminars, during in-service training and excellent communication between all departments. An example is a dictionary of terminology used in mathematics, ensuring all staff use the same language with boarders, avoiding misunderstandings. This ensures staff helping with homework, or different teachers all say, for example, take away rather than minus. The school provides spotlight seminars to other schools to disseminate the good practice. One boarder said, 'when I came here I could not read. Now I am studying A levels and expect to go to college.'
- The school provides a very safe environment, with excellently maintained health and safety standards. Risk assessments are expertly designed, comprehensive, and well maintained, making staff think about the objectives they wish to achieve in any activity. This supports the culture of stretching boundaries for young people and providing them with challenging but achievable targets in a safe environment.
- The school has excellent health care services which are fully integrated with all departments to the benefit of the boarders. This has aided in the school achieving healthy school status by delivering an excellently coordinated service looking at healthy eating, good exercise and emotional well-being of the boarders. Boarders benefit from the nurses' delivery of parts of the school curriculum and their close working with staff and parents.
- Parents say the school is excellent at communicating with them and achieves excellent outcomes for their children. One parent said, 'I have nothing but superlatives to say about the school; it is outstanding, absolutely outstanding, excellent in every area. Communication cannot be faulted and gets better all the

time.'

- The school has a highly individualised approach to work with boarders and their parents. This ensures that all personal, cultural and religious needs are met. The school has a strong commitment to assisting all residential pupils to follow their own religious faith and cultural requirements.
- The school has successfully addressed the three recommendations made at the last inspection. All the national minimum standards are met. To further improve the school is asked to share future developments in child protection procedures with the local authority and to ensure that all relevant staff undertake training in the use of restraint.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. A parent said that the headteacher warned her that her child would change in the school: 'He has changed, he is far more confident, the same person but very confident with a good self-image. If he had not had this intervention he would be a wreck.' Boarders establish excellent relationships and encourage and support each other. The school has an evident culture of support and mutual understanding among the boarders. One young person said, 'I was bullied in my last school. Here people all bond well, all have some form of disability but receive help and support from others, not ridicule.'

The head of boarding and the boarding staff have excellent relationships with the boarders and communicate excellently with their parents. Parents say that communication could not be better and that staff show innovation in ensuring this occurs wherever they are. For example, parents working abroad use Skype to communicate with their children, and the school are developing this access for all pupils to use in future.

Boarders display excellent behaviours and they are supported by all staff and other young people to address their personal difficulties, promoting self-confidence, engagement with the learning programme and an appreciation of their achievements. Structured support is provided by pupils through the leadership programme and the amicus programme where older pupils give mentoring, support and teaching to younger boarders. Boarders say, 'older pupils relate well to the younger ones through these schemes. Younger pupils are not afraid to approach us; we enjoy helping them and it breaks down barriers.' Many boarders have previously experienced isolation due to their communication difficulties. The coordinated work by all staff helps them to make significant progress in communication skills and relationship development. Staff encourage boarders to build friendships both within the school and in their own communities. Staff welcome friends on activities or as visitors to the school, assisting young people to build strong relationships.

Boarders use the excellent activities to help them develop an awareness of others

and personal social skills. Some of the community-based activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh awards, cadets, drama and inter-school activities engage them in developing a sense of responsibility for others and support their moral development. Young people say they really enjoy the activities, which entertain them and contribute to their developing self-confidence and social engagement. The school listens to ideas from the residential pupils to improve the already excellent programme. This has resulted in a change in the timetable of activities to ensure more staff are available to provide a greater choice in activities, while still supporting the educational programme. One parent said of the programme, 'they engage the children in activities that will allow them to succeed.'

Boarders prepare for leaving the school with expert assistance from the internal careers service and the boarding staff. The careers service works very closely with parents, and plans are made for next steps with them. The individual residential pupil's wishes and aptitudes are essential to this planning process, which helps parents to engage in identifying a pathway most likely to succeed for their child. One pupil said, 'the school provides us with excellent support, it gives us a series of stepping stones which lead us away from the high level of support and encourages our independence.' Many past residents keep in touch with the school and thank them for their assistance in selecting the right path for them. Past boarders have outstanding achievements, both academically and socially. A typical comment is, 'I found the school to be a fantastic part of my life, it was the only school I ever enjoyed going to and I met some of the best friends I still have.' Boarders learn basic self-care from staff, including managing their own medication, as well as self-help skills and cooking basic meals.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the school's provision for boarders is outstanding. Boarders have access to a fantastic selection of activities after school. The school has tremendous on-site facilities and appropriately skilled, experienced and qualified staff to engage young people in having fun and developing new skills. Staffing numbers are good, with excellent support from the head of boarding. All staff have obtained or are obtaining an appropriate qualification to work with young people. Many staff are also undertaking additional training such as mountain biking, first aid or lifeguard training, to support the extensive activities programme. Young people say that they enjoy the activities, which are many and varied, and support their development, assist them in learning how to play with others and how to use the outdoors constructively. Boarders also say that foreign trips, 'help us understand other cultures, help our coursework but mostly help us to develop confidence'.

Most residential pupils remain registered with their own doctors, dentists and opticians, and parents work closely with medical staff to ensure they can meet all health needs. Medical staff are appropriately qualified and excellently integrated into the life of the school. Health care is excellent and provides the young people with a caring, sensitive and innovative service. Medical staff maintain records to a very high

standard, evidencing close working with the school, residential staff, in-house specialists and external mental health services, as necessary. Medical staff assist boarders directly by providing a range of health seminars, including smoking cessation, sexual health and personal hygiene. Parents have also benefited by working closely with nurses to develop behavioural programmes, aiding their children to engage positively in school.

The school has achieved healthy eating status through the close working of the medical centre, the school, therapists, the domestic bursar and the kitchen staff. Boarders say that they are fully engaged in changing the menu through their food committee. Boarders say the food committee does effect change, for example, one suggestion resulted in the provision of salads as a choice at each meal time. Meals are well balanced and cater for personal preferences, cultural necessities and identified medical needs. Catering staff encourage young people to understand healthy eating by providing work experience opportunities and by delivering seminars in school. Parents describe the food as 'amazing.'

Boarders say they like the accommodation, which is well maintained, clean and comfortable. They can personalise their own space within the shared dormitories. Boarders have secure storage spaces and have appropriately private bathing and showering facilities to ensure their safe care. The head of the school meets daily with the maintenance staff ensuring speedy responses to all repairs and maintenance. The school is constantly developing exciting new provisions for the young people and this is evidenced in a fantastically well-resourced site with excellent well-used facilities.

Residential pupils' safety

The school achieves outstanding standards in providing safe care for boarders. Boarders receive care from staff who are subject to rigorous recruitment checks applied by appropriately trained staff. As a result, the school selects suitable staff with all appropriate clearances and qualifications, supporting the delivery of a high quality service to boarders. Boarders enjoy a service delivered only by staff employed directly by the school in sufficient numbers to ensure safe care at all times.

Boarders enjoy enhanced safe care, from staff application of comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures which contain local authority areas of good practice. All staff have training in child protection and safeguarding of boarders, and apply this in their practice, improving young people's understanding of how to stay safe. The school is particularly strong at delivering child exploitation and online protection guidance to boarders, enabling them to stay safe when using electronic equipment. During the inspection, the Local Authority Designated Officer met with the school and confirmed policies included good guidance on safety for boarders using the internet or telephones. The school shares this guidance and training with other settings in line with recommended best practice. The local authority had not previously viewed enhancements to policies. The school has established strong links

with the local authority to enhance training and safe working practices with boarders.

All staff work in an expertly structured and exceptionally consistent way with boarders to promote good behaviour. Staff communication with boarders is central to this approach, minimising misunderstandings and increasing their understanding of expectations. The consistent approach leads to virtually all serious incidents being resolved without any physical intervention. Not all staff have undertaken training in the use of physical interventions and the head of boarding adjusted staff guidance during the inspection to ensure safe interventions. Staff safely managed and recorded the few incidents of restraint, ensuring boarders' well-being at all times, in line with national guidelines. Staff maintain a strong focus on positive reward systems, recognising boarders' progress in achieving small attainable targets. Boarders enjoy the essential consistency in staff interventions, rewards and sanctions by staff use of an invaluable shared database. Boarders say they feel safe and that staff deal instantly with any bullying. Parents say, 'the home is 100% safe, staff are excellent and help the boys with their social interactions and particularly their conflict resolution helping them to interact positively with each other.'

The school has outstanding arrangements for monitoring and managing all health and safety issues. Enhanced security systems are in place to protect boarders against extreme threats, and regular fire drills ensure all boarders and staff are familiar with safe evacuation procedures. Risk assessments are a particular strength, maintaining safety while making staff think about the purpose and desired outcomes of each activity. The governors review detailed reports on the environment and all health and safety matters, providing appropriate support to the excellent maintenance of the school.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the boarding provision are outstanding. The head of the school and the head of boarding work closely with all department heads, ensuring the effective and efficient management of the boarding facility, as an integral part of the school. Parents say, 'the management of boarding is very good and excellently organised.' Managers ensure that all staff have all the current information and support necessary to interact appropriately with boarders. The management team communicates their high expectations to all staff and boarders through managers' use of the excellent internal communication systems, handover meetings, assemblies and personal one-to-one contacts. Routines run smoothly and ensure that boarders receive excellent care, from well-informed staff able to respond to their immediate needs. Staff use the excellent online communication systems, boarders' profiles and databases to ensure a consistent approach with the young people. This supports their provision of an orderly and safe environment in which the young people thrive. Boarders make stunning progress in many areas of development through this expertly coordinated approach.

Boarders receive support from the highly qualified, well supported and appropriately

supervised staff team. Staff are effusive about the support they receive from the head of boarding, who is readily available to provide what staff describe as a 'hands-on approach'. Boarding staff praise the head of boarding's approach saying, 'she encourages us to develop initiative, interests and skills to the benefit of the boarders.' Boarding staff complete comprehensive core training, including the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction leading to the Boarding Schools' Association Professional Diploma. Boarders benefit from the enhanced training staff engage in to enable them to provide safe but stimulating care.

Boarders have regular contact with the head of boarding, the independent visitor and governors as part of the quality assurance processes of the boarding facility. The independent visitor confirms that the head of boarding and the head of the school are very receptive to her feedback and respond positively, to the benefit of the boarders. The governors enthusiastically support the management of the school and the process of continuous improvement as outlined in the development plan.

Staff maintain excellent records which assist them in meeting all the care and developmental needs of the boarders. Boarders and their parents contribute to these records, ensuring that staff can help them meet cultural and religious needs, as well as their often complex personal learning and developmental targets. Parents say that communication is excellent and is improving all of the time. Staff communicate to parents in the way which they are most comfortable with, including email, telephone calls or direct personal contact.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What should the school do to improve further?

- share enhancements to the safeguarding arrangements with the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- ensure that the restraint policy is clear about which staff may be involved in restraints.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



03/07/2012

Good day

Inspection of More House School

I wish to thank you all for the friendly and polite welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I would particularly like to thank all of those who showed me around and those who happily shared their views of the school with me. I found your school to be outstanding with excellent leadership from all staff but particularly the head of school and the head of boarding. You all make outstanding progress in the school and as boarders in the boarding facility. I was impressed at the assistance you give to each other and your excellent social skills. You showed me a vast range of activities and I was pleased to see so many of you enthusiastically participating in so many diverse events. I asked the school to make a slight change to staff guidance or training to ensure your safe care and also asked them to share some of their policies with the local authority. These requests were to further enhance the already excellent care you receive. Once again thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Angus Mackay