

Lucton School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Leonard Hird
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Nominated person	Gillian Rigden Thorne
Date of last inspection	29 January 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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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

The school is an independent co-educational day and boarding school with charitable status. It is set in its own large grounds close to a small rural town. The school offers independent education to children from the United Kingdom and abroad. The school provides education for children between the ages of four to 19 years and boarding school provision for boys and girls between seven to 19 years. The school maintains a strong Christian tradition, but welcomes pupils of other faiths. The school provides boarding facilities in two houses one of which is purpose built for up to 70 boys and girls between the ages of seven to 19 years.

Summary

The purpose of the visit to the school was to carry out an inspection of all of the key national minimum standards relating to boarding schools in the different outcome areas of Every Child Matters. The boarding provision at the school is providing the pupils with a safe environment that is helping promote their social, educational and cultural needs. The school meets all of the standards and is outstanding in the promotion of equality and diversity. The leadership and management of the school is good and offers effective support to boarders and boarding house staff. There are a small number of areas in which the school needs to improve and these are included in the recommendations.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The recommendations made at the last inspection undertaken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection have all been addressed and boarding pupils now have access to better pupil representation, there is a lockable metal medical cabinet in the medical room and the hot water supply in the boarding house has been improved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The health and medication needs of boarding pupils are well-managed and administered by the school's experienced matron. Clear policies and procedures are followed for the management, storage and administration of medication. Medical records are well-maintained and are securely kept in the medical room. Up-to-date parental permission for the administration of medication and emergency health needs is also kept with these records. The health care needs of boarders are being promoted by the matron and other members of the staff team who receive training in the administration of first aid. However, boarding house staff have not received any formal training in the safe handling and administration of medication and this might compromise the safe handling of the boarding pupils' medication.

Boarding pupils are registered at the local health centre and where appropriate with local dentists and opticians. Regular liaison is occurring with the local health centre and the other health services throughout the school term. Through the school's personal social and health care curriculum boarding pupils are receiving age-appropriate advice and guidance in personal, social and health care topics, such as substance misuse and personal relationships.

Boarding pupils take all of their meals in a tidy and functional dining hall. The school meals are well-prepared and cooked on site by an experienced and well-qualified catering staff. Boarding pupils have a good, healthy and nutritious diet which helps in the promotion of their physical well-being. The school's catering provider has achieved a 'healthy schools' award in recognition of the steps it has taken to develop healthy lifestyles for children. Menus are well-planned in conjunction with the boarding pupils, a number of choices are available including a vegetarian option. All of the meals prepared at the school take full account of any of the specialist or cultural dietary needs of the boarding pupils. Boarding pupils indicate, 'the food is good on the whole, there is plenty of it, but sometimes the evening meals are variable in content'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There are effective safeguarding, anti-bullying and complaints policies and procedures in place. Boarders and parents are able to access information regarding safeguarding concerns, complaints and anti-bullying issues from booklets, pamphlets and the school's website. Boarding staff are confident that bullying is not a major issue at the school, although they are alert to their responsibilities to manage any incident should it arise. The boarders have a very supportive attitude towards each other and bullying is rare. Boarders spoken to said, 'that if they saw any incidents of bullying occurring then they would report it to staff and that it would be dealt with very quickly'.

All staff, as well as the 'Gap' students and prefects, receive appropriate levels of safeguarding training and briefing under the guidance of the designated person. All are aware of the relevant policies and reporting procedures regarding safeguarding issues. Safeguarding of the boarding pupils is taken very seriously by the boarding house team and they displayed a sound working knowledge in this area. Senior members of the school's management team who are involved with the appointment of staff have undertaken appropriate training in safer recruitment and there is a governor who has oversight for safeguarding matters at the school.

Comprehensive systems are in place to record, monitor and prevent risks to health and safety. Appropriate risk assessments are also in place to ensure the safety of boarders when out-of-school activities and trips are organised. Fire and safety equipment in the boarding house areas is regularly checked. Regular fire drills are undertaken and boarding pupils confirm they know the procedures they have to follow in case of fire.

There are robust recruitment procedures in place and appropriate checks are carried out on all applicants for work, including those from outside of the United Kingdom. The recruitment files and single central register are well-documented and information is readily accessible. All relevant vetting checks, including a verbal reference check for all staff, are completed and satisfied prior to them commencing their employment at the school. All members of staff working at the school have been recruited in full accordance with the national minimum standards and or the Education Regulations and this confidential information is maintained securely by the school. Visitors to the school are required to be signed in at the reception and their movements are monitored by staff throughout the visit.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Members of the boarding community are well-supported by the boarding house staff team. Boarders confirm that they can talk to any member of the house staff team as well as to the experienced matron about any personal or welfare problem. They confirm that any issues they raise with staff is treated in a confidential and sympathetic manner. Information is available in the boarders handbook listing external agencies who can be contacted by boarders if they need to speak to an independent listener or seek independent advice. There are good levels of extra staff support available in the school and boarding house for those boarding pupils who may be experiencing problems.

Equality and diversity is a key strength and boarders from different cultures and backgrounds are clearly made welcome within the school. There is a positive culture at the school that encourages boarding pupils to fully respect each other. The school ensures that full account is taken of the differing needs, abilities and backgrounds of the boarder, so that no individual boarder is disadvantaged. Boarding pupils are encouraged to follow their own religion and help is readily available to ensure this occurs. The prevailing culture is of care and respect throughout the school which enables the boarders to enjoy strong friendships with each other. This is reflected in comments made by boarders, 'we really do get on with each other', 'we are like a big family and support each other while we are living away from home'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarding pupils are confident that they can influence decisions made about boarding life at the school. There are a number of different forums in the school for the boarding community to put forward their points of view. There have been some positive changes brought about by these consultative bodies including changes to the menu, activities and facilities in the boarding houses. Boarders speak on a daily basis with the house staff and can raise issues informally about their lives in the boarding house. Regular group meetings are held in the houses to provide boarders with the opportunity to discuss any aspect of boarding with the relevant members of the house staff team. Boarders confirm that they can discuss matters relating to the boarding house with the headmistress and other members of the senior management team at any time.

Boarding pupils are actively encouraged to maintain contact with their families. They can keep in contact with their families in a number of different ways including the use of e-mails, telephones and handwritten letters. For boarding pupils who have family either living or working abroad special arrangements can be made to enable them to keep in contact with them at suitable times.

Induction for new boarders is organised by the house staff team to introduce them to their respective houses, and to advise them about the different aspects of boarding life. New boarding pupils are provided with a handbook that contains useful information on the organisation of their respective houses. Boarders confirm that house staff help them settle in very quickly and that the boarding community they have come to live with gives them a lot of support, advice and guidance to help them settle into boarding life.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders have access to individual secure storage facilities in their rooms and other valuables including small amounts of money can be stored securely by house staff if required. Members of the boarding house staff team ensure records are kept of all monies and valuables stored by the boarders.

The standard of boarding accommodation in the two boarding houses is good, although there are some variations due to the improvement programme that is currently in progress. The boarding houses are generally in good decorative order, with suitable furniture and fittings. The living and sleeping areas in both houses provide a pleasant and comfortable environment for the boarding pupils to live in and, in many cases, these areas have been personalised by the boarders. There are good levels of privacy for washing and bathing in both boarding houses and boarders confirm there are no issues in this important area of boarding life. The refurbishment and re-decoration work within the smaller of the two boarding houses has been completed to a high standard and boarding pupils are highly complimentary of the work.

The school is committed to improving boarding accommodation and is implementing a rolling programme of refurbishment and redecoration throughout the rest of the purpose-built boarding accommodation to further enhance it. All minor repairs and re-decoration work required in the boarding houses are carried out quickly and efficiently, by the school's maintenance team.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school has robust policies and procedures in place for dealing with equality and diversity. Many of the boarders come from different cultural and social backgrounds and are living in harmony with each other. The school's ethos is to encourage respect for each other and celebrate cultural differences. There is a very positive approach taken by staff to the promotion of respect for the different cultures, backgrounds and religions of the boarding community. Boarders confirm the school is trying to understand their diverse backgrounds and that the boarding house staff team involve them in all aspects of boarding life.

The school provides a well produced and easy to understand Statement of its Principles and Practices on Boarding as well as a number of different information sources including the school's website about its policies, routines and advice on how to help their children while attending the school.

There have been a number of significant changes to the management of the boarding houses at the school since the last inspection with the recent appointment of a new boarding house staff team. The senior management team is providing effective levels of management, appraisal and support for the new boarding house staff team. The current staffing levels are sufficient for the safe supervision of boarding pupils. All records relating to boarding, are well-maintained and these include, environmental risk assessments, sanctions, accidents and complaints. The organisation and management of the boarding houses is creating a safe, non discriminatory and supportive environment for boarders to live in.

All of the new boarding staff, have undertaken core training to ensure that they are fully aware of their responsibilities to keep boarders safe. Members of the boarding house team are given an individual copy of the staff handbook containing the school's policies and procedures to

ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities. The boarding house staff team are ensuring that the boarding community is safe and happy.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure opportunities are provided for training boarding house staff in the safe handling and administration of medication (NMS 15.7)
- ensure a review takes place of the evening menus in conjunction with boarding pupils to explore ways of developing and improving the menu (NMS 24.1)
- ensure that the identified renovation and refurbishment work of the boarding houses is completed as per the timescales as detailed in the refurbishment and development plan for the school (NMS 40.5).