

Aldwickbury school

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Martha Nethaway
Type of Inspection	Key

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Nominated person	Tom Hoare
Date of last inspection	17 October 2006

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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

Aldwickbury School is an Independent School offering full boarding and temporary boarding on a small scale. At the time of this inspection there were 34 boarders, three of whom were full time boarders, aged from 11 years to 13 years. Fulltime boarding is Monday to Thursday night and occasionally Sundays. At weekends, the boarders return home to be with their families. Boarding can be flexible for up to three nights or as a regular boarder for four nights with return to home after school on Friday evening.

The school has a governing body, its trustees.

The main building is a Victorian country house dating from 1871 with large, pleasant rooms adapted as dormitories, communal areas, classrooms and offices. The school is well equipped with modern classrooms, an indoor supervised swimming pool, library, hall and gymnasium. The school has a tuck shop with publicised access times. Later buildings have been added to provide extra educational and sport facilities and the facilities have been continuously developed.

The boys share a range of facilities during and after school hours and benefit greatly from both sporting and general interest pastimes.

After school study is covered in a set period of time with extra support available to the children. Leisure time is pre-planned every evening and the boys enjoy a variety of activities.

The school provides a sick bay where children can rest if feeling unwell or wait for a parent to arrive to take them home, if necessary.

Summary

This inspection was a full announced visit. The outcome groups relating to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic wellbeing and organisation were assessed.

The overall quality rating is good with an outstanding feature in the outcome area for enjoying and achieving. Boarders enjoy a safe, fun and successful experience of boarding life. There is a strong tradition of celebrating life, learning and achievement. This allows boarders to make friends and be supported.

There is one recommendation being set as a result of this inspection visit.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the school was recommended to improve the tracking document used to monitor the required pre-employment checks in relation to the staff recruitment process. This has now been addressed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Boarder's health is promoted well. Staff are well informed about health needs because they obtain information from the parents about their child's medical history and relevant information. Boarders develop a clear understanding about various aspects of health through the scheme of work studied in personal, social, health and citizenship education. Topics such as drugs and using technology safely, for example emails and mobiles helps to safeguard and protect their welfare. The school strongly promotes healthy life styles and boarders are encouraged to be active outside of the curriculum during play times. For example, during the evening activities boarders often choose to be active joining in with things such as soccer, frisbee, tennis and swimming.

The school has in place, suitable procedures for the safe storage, handling and disposal of medications. The matron's team records medical matters appropriately. This team work effectively by providing 24 hour health care. Boarders are able to receive first aid treatment because the matron's staff are suitably trained.

The school employs catering staff that provide meals from fresh ingredients which are attractive in appearance and taste. The quantity, quality and choice of food is good. The school is able to meet boarder's special dietary, medical and religious needs. All staff involved in the preparation and cooking of food are suitably trained. The main dining room is a new building with a high specification and creates a very pleasant environment for boarders to eat in. There is a great array of food available including hot and cold meals, a salad bar and a range of desserts including fruit and yoghurts. Boarders commented, 'they provide you with a balanced diet because they have a large range of meals'. The dining room committee meet to discuss food related issues with representatives from all the forms.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The system in place to promote the safety and welfare of boarders is good. Boarders commented, 'that they felt secure and safe at the school'. There is a good staff to pupils ratio for the boarders and a small school site which ensures that they are easily supervised during their free time. They are given enough freedom, whilst being very aware of the boundaries. The routines and structures of boarding life makes certain that the boarders are safe at all times. The staff build strong positive relationships with the boarders and are very approachable. One boarder commented, 'all the staff are happy to listen to you'.

There are no child protection concerns at the school since the last inspection. Staff receive appropriate child protection training both formally and informally. The next full in service training is scheduled for January 2010. Staff know all the steps to take which are outlined in the school's operational child protection and safeguarding policy. The headteacher is the designated lead for child protection. However, he has not yet attended advanced child protection and safeguarding training and this could potentially compromise the development of essential skills and knowledge around the latest guidance around child protection.

The school has in place good systems and structures to help maintain safe practices with meeting it's health and safety obligations. Risk assessments are completed for day-to-day activities and community excursions. Good systems are in place to ensure that fire safety checks are being regularly completed. Boarders regularly participate in fire evacuations including nighttimes and this ensures they know what steps to taken in the event of an emergency. The school has in place a current fire risk assessment.

Boarders' behaviour is exemplary throughout the school. The school enshrines strong values based on respect, fairness, endeavour, kindness, integrity, commitment, independence and cooperation. Staff use positive incentives to recognise and reward good behaviours. Sanctions are occasionally used to encourage pupils to reflect on the consequences of their actions. Boarders commented, 'they do not experience bullying'. This is borne out in the vast majority of the returned boarders questionnaires. When incidents happen, staff act promptly and deal with incidents effectively. Boarders are further protected because the school has proactively provided teaching sessions on cyber bullying and technology misuse in educational settings.

The school has in place a good vetting and selection policy and procedure. The senior management team ensure that staff employed at the school are deemed suitable to work with children. All the necessary checks are completed including an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau check. The headteacher has attended advanced training on safer recruitment practices. As a result, the school has increased its stringent procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders benefit hugely from the excellent support provided by their tutors. They have weekly meetings where they discuss various topics, such as, the 'Value and Thought for the Week', current events and relevant pastoral issues. This positively contributes to the child's growing up, and preparation for moving to senior school. The headteacher commented, 'I do believe that our pupils are well rounded individuals and this is partly as a result of our emphasis on raising self-confidence and self-esteem'. Outside of this, boarders also have access to an independent visitor which is well promoted at the school. This ensures that they have the ability to seek outside help should they need it.

Boarders are involved in all aspects of school life, academic, cultural and sporting. The school helps the boarders to understand the importance of equality and diversity. Language days have been held and these help the pupils to realise that there are a variety of cultures in the world that are of equal significance.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders are supported and encouraged to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school. The school works hard to ensure that the boarders have very good relationships with the staff and this is crucial in allowing boarders to have a voice in their school. There are good ratios of staff to boarders in the evenings allowing individuals to be given quality time with staff. There are regular boarders' meetings where they can share their views. A range of issues have been addressed from meals to activities. For example, boarders' supper club where the boys choose the menu, cook it, and decide which members of staff to invite. Boarders also have in place a 'suggestion box', where they can make recommendations anonymously to make improvements for boarding life. They really value this because they directly contribute to improvements.

Boarders are able to move into and leave the school in a planned and sensitive manner. There is a clear admission procedure that fully describes how trial visits are organised. Taster evenings for year six boys are arranged so that they have opportunity to participate in boarding. Boarders

commented, 'that staff including the matrons, are friendly and welcoming and help them settle into boarding life'.

Boarders are able to keep in contact with their family and friends. They have access to a phone in the boarding facilities. Full boarders are allowed to bring in their own mobiles which are locked away in the day for safe keeping but can be used by the boarders in the evening. The temporary boarders do not need telephone access as frequently as most of them see their parents during the week.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The boarding accommodation is of a good standard. Boarders are provided with a bed, locker and hanging space that is theirs, whenever they board. The facilities for the boarders are good with private showers, toilets and enough basins for the number of boarders that board. The facilities provide enough spaces for the boarders to play, socialise and relax so that they are comfortable and it is for their exclusive use during the evenings. There is a quiet area for boarders who wish to use it in the evenings. The staff promote the culture amongst the boarders of respect for each other and their possessions.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The development of the school as a whole has continued at a pace including a new build for a dining room, kitchen and library. In addition, there is a new management structure to the boarding team including the appointment of a Head of Boarding. The management of the boarding house is a strength, the staff are committed and enjoy working with the boarders in this environment. The team of matrons including the boarding matron have a clear understanding that boarding life is different from that of a school day. The boarding staff work well together by attending regular staff meetings so that the boarding environment is an integral part of the school. There are enough staff available to support the boarding. There are teaching staff involved across the boarding week who rotate on a daily basis. In addition, gap students also provide extra help with activities and spending time with boarders.

Boarders are looked after by staff following clear boarding policies and practice. The staff all understand issues such as child protection and have job descriptions that help to ensure that they know what their jobs entail and what is required of them in the boarding school. There is overlap between various members of staff and this is especially important on pastoral matters as staff ensure that all boarders are well cared for.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school is committed to meeting the needs of boarders through a caring and structured learning environment.

The school has an extensive range of publications which includes the appropriate information about the full range of boarding matters. The information is accessible and clearly presented.

The school has in place an effective strategy to address risk management. Health and safety matters are given good prominence and boarders are regularly reminded throughout the school day and in the boarding facilities that their safety and welfare is important. The headteacher,

bursar and other senior managers monitor events, such as, complaints, punishments, recording of accidents and risk assessments.

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 the designated person for child protection attends advanced training with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. (NMS 3.6.)