

Woodbridge School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Dorrit Andrews
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Nominated person	
Date of last inspection	16 January 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

Woodbridge School, set in 80 acres of wooded grounds, has occupied its present site since 1864. Education is offered to boys and girls from ages 4 to 18 years. There are currently 929 day pupils and 30 boarders. The school has a Church of England Foundation, but welcomes students of other faiths.

Boarding pupils currently range from 14 to 18 years of age, 18 of whom are boys and 12 are girls. Almost all boarders contributed to the inspection and stated they were 'always or usually' happy with the school.

Boarding accommodation is provided in one co-educational senior house, which in the main is for sixth form pupils. The majority of rooms are single with study facilities and are located on the first and second floors of the house. There are a number of communal facilities available to boarders on the ground floor, including common rooms, games room and a kitchen. Main meals are taken in the school's central dining room situated in close proximity to the boarding house.

A housemaster and his wife manage the boarding house and are assisted by a team of house staff, including an assistant housemaster who covers duties in the absence of the housemaster.

Summary

This was an announced parallel inspection with the Independent Schools Inspectorate and all key standards were inspected. The school meets all key national minimum standards and exceeds a number of them. Outcome areas for staying safe, enjoying and achieving, and positive contribution are all judged as outstanding. Being healthy, economic well-being and organisation are judged as good.

The individuality of pupils is recognised and they receive outstanding pastoral support. Emphasis is placed on the integration of all pupils with particular attention being paid to the induction of pupils from overseas. Pupils are able to contribute ideas in relation to the day to day running of the boarding house and school and report that they feel listened to.

Boarders receive good health care and effective arrangements are in place to secure health services as necessary. A wide range of activities are available at weekends to promote a healthy lifestyle, support integration and widen interests. Standards of behaviour are very high and few sanctions are used.

Safety and security matters are taken seriously by the school and robust procedures are in place to support the maintenance of a safe environment.

There is strong leadership and management of boarding and an active focus on the continual improvement of the boarding experience for pupils. The school provides good training opportunities to staff to assist them in promoting and safeguarding the welfare of boarders.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

All recommendations from the previous report have been addressed. The last inspection asked the school to review the arrangements for placing boarders with host families during holiday periods and to develop a protocol for visitors accessing the new theatre. Host families are no longer used. Instead, where required, boarders have their own guardian arranged by parents. Procedures are now in place for dealing with visitors to the school's theatre along with clear signage.

The school was also asked to provide an additional toilet on the ground floor of the boarding house and to review the arrangements for securing boarders' valuables. An additional toilet has been provided and lockable storage is available to all boarders.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The health needs of boarders are responded to well and they receive health care as necessary. The school matron, a qualified nurse, is on duty throughout the school day. In her absence, duties are covered by a relief matron. Outside of the school day, boarders' health needs are responded to by the house matron. Strong links are maintained with the school's medical officer who visits weekly and also provides on-call support. Pupils have access to both male and female doctors and may choose to visit the doctor's surgery if preferred.

The school holds a medical history of each pupil and obtains written parental consent to medical treatment and first aid. Good records are maintained of accidents, treatment and significant illnesses and matrons are fully conversant with the handling of confidential information. Health care plans are in place for the management of specific medical needs and are regularly reviewed with pupils concerned. Good, effective systems are in place for the secure storage and administering of medication, including those held by boarders. Matrons have access to regular training and study days and the school doctor to update their knowledge and to support their role.

Personal, social and health education primarily takes place within the teaching environment of the school and is supplemented by tutorial sessions, assemblies and advice from house and medical staff, including the school's doctor.

Boarders are provided with varied, healthy meals and are given opportunities to make suggestions and provide feedback in relation to the food offered. Changes made as a result of listening to pupils include, changes to the salad bar, the introduction of smoothies and pupils being able to make their own toast. Special diets and cultural needs are also catered for. Boarders confirm they have access to drinking water and snack making facilities in their house kitchen and may also bring in their own provisions. Fresh fruit is readily available at all meal times in the school dining room. However, a number of boarders would like fresh fruit to be made regularly available in the boarding house as a healthy snack.

Weekend arrangements for meals offer boarders some flexibility in routine and are popular. However, comments from some parents and guardians indicate that there is some confusion in relation to their knowledge of these arrangements.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The safeguarding of boarders' welfare is strongly promoted. Staff are very aware of their responsibilities towards the young people in their care and have access to appropriate child protection guidance and regular training to support them in their role. Strong links are maintained with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and designated staff attend local safeguarding training. Bullying is not tolerated and is not identified as a problem at the school. Opportunities are regularly taken to discuss such issues across the school community, at Chapel services, boarding house meetings and tutorials. Staff receive training in dealing with incidents of bullying, and guidance is given to pupils holding positions of responsibility on how to refer any concerns coming to their attention.

The school's complaint policy is made available to parents and parents and the raising of concerns is encouraged at an early stage. Boarders have a clear understanding of what they can do if they are unhappy and identify a wide range of support within the school community they feel able to access. For example, the head teacher, senior staff, tutors, house staff, Chaplain and members of the peer support group.

Standards of behaviour are very high and boarders view house rules and expectations as being 'fair'. The community role of prefects is understood and is valued by those appointed and by fellow pupils. House staff show respect for the privacy of boarders and are sensitive to their needs. For example, staff knock on doors and wait for a reply before entering.

Robust procedures are in place for the recruitment and checking of all staff. Records sampled are of a high standard. In addition, a number of senior staff have completed safer recruitment training.

Safety and security matters are taken seriously by the school and robust systems and policies support the maintenance of a safe environment for pupils, staff and visitors. Boarders are familiar with fire evacuation procedures and regular fire drills are conducted at different times. A fire risk assessment is in place and there is regular testing and servicing of fire safety equipment and alarm systems. Significant emphasis is placed on boarders signing in and out of the boarding house in order that their whereabouts are known, particularly in the event of a fire. Risk assessments are in place for school and boarding premises, activities both on and off site and in relation to the grounds.

A record of visitors to the school and boarding house is maintained and procedures are in place for dealing with visitors to the school's theatre along with clear signage to support the safeguarding of pupils. Where possible, routine maintenance work in the boarding house is carried out when boarders are not present. When this is not possible, safe working practices are followed to safeguard pupils. All boarders spoken with commented that they feel safe in the boarding house and school and aware of health and safety matters affecting them. Boarders' bedrooms are for their exclusive use and clear guidelines are in place regarding this. Communal areas are for boarders and other pupils designated to share these facilities, including day pupils visiting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders receive an outstanding level of pastoral care from a range of staff, including house staff, tutors, Chaplain, school matron and the school doctor. In addition, a peer support group is available supported by the Chaplain and there is a 'worry' box in the boarding house where boarders may leave a note for the housemaster. Whilst all pupils are assigned a tutor, it is clear that pupils may go to who they wish with any worries or problems. Good communication links are maintained between staff to support the needs of individual pupils with information being shared on a 'need to know' basis. Strong emphasis is placed on the individual needs and circumstances of pupils and significant changes in circumstances, such as family breakdown are responded to sensitively. The quality of pastoral care provided is viewed as a strength of the school by parents. Their comments include 'staff know pupils very well and encourage them and give them mutual respect', 'our daughter feels at home' and 'helps pupils to believe in themselves and their abilities'.

There are sound relationships between staff and boarders and a sense of community within the boarding house. Boarders refer to the house as being 'like a second home' and having a 'friendly and personal atmosphere'. Interactions observed between boarders, and staff and boarders were seen to be positive, warm and supportive.

The integration of all pupils is positively promoted and actively encouraged across the school community. Individual needs are acknowledged and excellent systems are in place to support and assist children who have specific cultural needs. Comments received from boarders and parents also highlight the school as being 'so welcoming in a foreign country'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are enabled to contribute their views to the operation of the school and boarding house in a number of ways. These include, boarders' meetings, food committee meetings, school council meetings and tutorials. Individuals may also request a meeting with a member of the senior management team. Changes made as a result of listening to the views of boarders include the provision of a house budget for trips, widened access to sporting activities, inter-house events and changes to menus. Other changes made in school include clocks in classrooms and the provision of football goals in a play area. Boarders report that ideas and views are given serious consideration and that feedback is received.

Boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families. A payphone is available for pupils' use although many boarders use their own mobile phone. Staff also offer use of the office telephone when necessary. A high proportion of boarders use email as a means of communication and a wireless connection has been installed which has been greatly welcomed. However, recent difficulties have been encountered in some parts of the house and further work is being conducted to remedy the problem. Some boarders report they would welcome an extension to the current level of internet access during weekend evenings. The Housemaster contacts parents as necessary to discuss concerns and to pass on praise and celebration of individual achievements.

New boarders are introduced to the operation of the school and boarding house routines, and are helped to settle in. A comprehensive induction programme is provided for all boarders. Additional provision is made for the induction of boarders from overseas who participate in an excellent course developed to provide a range of experiences with the support of a peer mentors.

Boarders are extremely positive in their comments about their induction and the range of areas covered.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Secure, lockable storage is made available to boarders in the boarding house. Some monies are placed with the Housemaster for safe keeping and good records are maintained of all transactions. Boarders are also helped to open a bank account if they wish. No problems are reported of items going missing. A tuck shop is available in the house and is operated by boarders. A collective decision is made by boarders on the use of any profits. For example, a dishwasher has recently been purchased for the use of boarders.

A programme of refurbishment and redecoration is underway and the provision of new furniture, curtains and accessories to communal areas are greatly appreciated by boarders. Communal areas present as warm, homely and welcoming and the accommodation throughout is clean, appropriately ventilated and heated. House staff encourage the personalisation of bedrooms, including layout. Adequate levels of storage are provided and there is regular testing of boarders' electrical equipment. Sufficient showers, baths and toilets are available to boarders within the sleeping areas; separate facilities are provided for staff and visitors.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of boarding is strong and there is an active focus on the continual improvement of the boarding experience of pupils. Up-to-date documentation regarding the school's policies and procedures and statement of boarding principles and practice are in place and made available to parents, boarders and staff.

The provision of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school positively promotes the integration of all pupils and recognises their individuality. There is outstanding support to students from other cultures and linguistic backgrounds and a comprehensive programme of induction is in place in relation to the school and wider community. Pupils are also encouraged to embrace opportunities to participate in local community work to widen their understanding of society and the needs of others.

The organisation of boarding provides appropriate protection and separation of boarders by age and gender. No discrepancies are reported by boarders, staff or parents in the quality of provision or boarding practices for boys and girls.

Good systems are in place for the effective monitoring of records by the head teacher, designated members of the senior management team and the school matron.

Boarders are sufficiently supervised by competent and experienced staff and are made aware of duty rotas and who is responsible for them at specific times. Clear guidance is given to boarders in relation to contacting the house when they are away from the school site and encountering difficulties. Suitable arrangements are in place for covering duties at times of staff absence. House staff are committed and clear in their role, know who they are accountable to and have access to good training opportunities and systems of support. Good levels of

communication are reported by staff and include daily handovers, good use of daily recording and regular team meetings.

Systems are in operation for the annual appraisal of all staff. Job descriptions are in place and regularly reviewed.

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):

- consider the regular provision of fresh fruit in the boarding house (NMS 24)
- clarify the catering arrangements at weekends to parents and guardians (NMS 24)
- consider the request from boarders to extend the current level of internet access during evenings at weekends. (NMS 19.4)