

Slindon College

Inspection report for boarding school

Unique reference number	SC014719
Inspection date	2 December 2009
Inspector	Gaynor Moorey / Rita Griffiths
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	8 November 2004

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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

This secondary school is for boys and currently accommodates 37 full time and flexi boarders from the age of 10 up to the age of 18. The school is set in large grounds which include pitches for football and rugby, tennis court and large areas of countryside. The school is set in a large building and the students who board have their dormitories mainly on the first and second floors.

Summary

At this announced inspection all the key standards were assessed. The school provides a good level of care for the students who board. Each child's individuality is valued and respected and the ethos of the school ensures that those who board are nurtured and developed both academically and socially. The strong leadership of the school and systems operated therein ensure that all the children generally have their welfare promoted and protected. A formal programme of training and supervision is provided for all staff working in the boarding provision. The size of the school ensures that all the students can be monitored and supported closely and that there is 'always someone to talk to'.

Boarders live in comfortable accommodation and benefit from a wide range of activities. The boarding ethos of the school is relaxed, open and homely and there is an emphasis placed on respecting each other and showing courtesy and manners to everyone. As a result of this inspection four recommendations were made.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is not applicable to this school as the last inspection was in 2006.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The school offers clear guidance to the students on the promotion of healthy living and lifestyles. Other health issues are discussed in personal, social citizenship and health education within the school day and the students can approach members of staff to discuss any personal issues or problems. Appropriate information is provided to the students on issues such as illegal substances, sexual health and other social issues. This information is shared sensitively and commensurate with the students development and complex needs.

Thorough health records are developed for the students. These contain information such as health histories, allergies, specific health needs and vaccination records. Welfare plans are designed to look at ways of supporting the students with specific situations, issues and needs which may affect a young person's emotional wellbeing. Specific health plans are kept for students who have identified health needs such as Aspergers or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Sensitive information is shared with members of staff on a 'need to know' basis and all records are securely stored.

There are clear policies and guidance with regard to monitoring and promoting the students health. Examples of policies include medication, dealing with accidents and emergency treatment. Staff within the boarding house are trained in first aid. The school surgery is competently run by the matron and one of the boarding staff who both have first aid training. However more extensive training is required to understand some of the complex needs of the students. The administration and storage of medication is closely and robustly audited and monitored. Records are thorough and up to date. Clear records are kept of medication coming to the school and a stock take is maintained to ensure that all the records tally. Medication is securely stored. The school does have consent on file for each child but the form does not contain all forms of medical treatment.

The students have access to a local doctor. Appointments can be made with both male and female doctors. Other health appointments are also in place if they are needed, these include opticians, dentists or other specialist input, such as a speech and language therapist and counsellors if required.

The matron provides caring and sensitive attention to the students who present themselves to her. She is very aware that some students may at times require reassurance and a kind word rather than medical attention. Support offered to the students is nurturing and attentive. Parents or guardians are notified of any illnesses or injuries and clear records are kept of any accidents. The sick bay is situated in the matron's room.

The standard of catering in the school is good. The catering is managed by the school who employ the staff to work in the kitchen. The kitchen is well managed and the chef ensures that all the staff are trained appropriately to their roles. The kitchen is regularly cleaned and a visit by kitchen inspectors graded the premises as 'excellent'. Meals are sourced as much as possible with local produce and most of the food is home made. The menu is prepared on a weekly basis and offers three choices at each main meal including a vegetarian option and soup. The children gave unanimous feedback that the food is excellent. Members of staff and parents also stated that the food is of a very good standard. The catering staff are very aware of the specific dietary needs of students and ensure that these are met.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The size of the boarding operation in the school means that there are always adults around to support the students and that any incidents or niggles between them are noted. The school has a policy to protect and give guidance about bullying. Guidance around bullying and behaviour management is in place for the staff. The school is involved in the national anti bullying week and teaches about bullying in personal, social and health education. The students when asked did feel there was some bullying in the boarding house but this was dealt with by the staff. The students are encouraged to live as part of a close community and to look out for each other. The school's approach ensures that bullying is unacceptable.

The head teacher is responsible for the monitoring of child protection and disseminates information about child protection to all members of staff. There is a child protection policy in place for the staff to follow and this contains clear guidance with regard to reporting issues of concern and how to respond to disclosures by children. The policy does include full information of reporting practices used in the school for outside professional agencies and is written in conjunction with local protocols. All members of staff have child protection training

as part of their induction and the head teacher ensures that all members of staff receive refresher training and reminders about their role and obligations. This training includes all adults who work in the school, including maintenance, catering and domestic staff. The level of awareness about child protection issues and the adults' responsibility to keep the children safe, ensures that there is a good commitment to keeping students safe from abuse.

The students are very clear as to what behaviour is expected from them. There are sanctions in place such as non use of computers, loss of activities and a repayment system for damage. Disciplinary measures are seen as an opportunity for students to discuss and address their behaviour rather than being seen as a punishment in itself. All sanctions are recorded in a designated record book. Major sanctions such as exclusion are recorded and kept by the head teacher.

The school does have a book in which to record any incidents that involve staff handling the students in a physical manner. There were no incidents recorded. The school celebrates achievements and good behaviour and rewards the students with privileges.

The students have numerous opportunities to voice their opinions and complaints. It is clear that most of the students are confident to express their views. This means that any complaints or issues can be passed on to various members of staff including the head of boarding and head teacher. The students are responded to when they raise issues and feedback from them confirms that their views are taken seriously and acknowledged. Complaints from parents were seen to be dealt with appropriately.

Boarders and staff alike are protected from risks to their safety and wellbeing. The health and safety committee meet once a term to review and discuss issues. A robust and comprehensive programme of risk assessment identifies and addresses any known or perceived dangers. Such risk assessments are regularly reviewed and when necessary, amended. Within the environment potentially hazardous areas and situations are also risk assessed. The students know which areas of the school are out of bounds. The house is surrounded by safety lighting.

When trips are carried out away from the school site, robust and individualised risk assessments are completed. These risk assessments are not only completed by the member of staff responsible for the trip or activity but are also checked by the outdoor activities coordinator and signed off by the head teacher. The students living at the school are encouraged to take part in activities which promotes their confidence and experience and in this context encourages them to take calculated and sensible risks. Examples of such activities are gun club, life saving, and swimming.

Records confirm that frequent testing of fire equipment and alarms is carried out and that fire drills occur regularly in the daytime. Drills need to be undertaken in the evening. The required information following a fire evacuation drill is recorded but not maintained in a single record. The students are aware of the fire drill procedures.

Students living in the school have their privacy respected. They are able to shower, wash and change privately in the bath and shower rooms and dormitories. Staff supervision is discrete, ensuring that the younger students have easy access to assistance and guidance if needed.

The school operates a recruitment process which ensures that adults working in the school in whatever role are subject to the required safety checks. There was one historic incident where

all checks were not in place for a new member of staff before they started work. The head teacher and bursar have now undertaken their safer recruitment training and have updated the recruitment policy. The bursar oversees the compilation of staff records and telephones referees to ensure their veracity. The head teacher also examines the recruitment records to ensure their accuracy.

There are clear guidelines and expectations for visitors to follow. All visitors must wear a visitor's badge when on the premises and sign the visitor's book. Additionally, they are supervised and escorted when on the premises. The adults living at the school who are not directly employed have written contracts but they do not contain details such as contact with children or supervising people visiting.

The boarding accommodation is set within the school and no one has access to it unless they are meant to be there. The boarding living areas are for the exclusive use of the students who live at the school and are not shared.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Students in the school are offered a wide and varied range of activities. There is a strong belief in the school that there is something at which each student can enjoy and excel, whether this is academically, in sport, drama, music or hobbies. The school provides the students with a range of activities in the evening and boarders confirm that the weekends are busy and there is at least one activity every weekend where they are taken out to different activities. Additionally, the students also have the opportunity to socialise with each other during their free time.

The students have a wide choice of adults to whom they can approach and this includes an independent visitor who not only visits the school but is also available by telephone. The students can also access independent telephone help lines. The students are very aware that they may approach their form tutor, heads of boarding, matron, boarding staff and the head teacher or other teaching staff in the school. The wide range of adults available, combined with the small size of the school means that advice, guidance and reassurance are readily and easily accessible. The school would arrange for outside specialist support to meet any health needs including counsellors and speech therapists. The students said that they are listened to and feel that there is 'always someone you can talk to'.

The school has students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Difference is celebrated and seen as an opportunity to learn about different cultures and religions. Cultural and religious issues are discussed with the students and opportunities are given to young people from different backgrounds to value and enjoy their culture whilst being integrated into the school community, which is Christian based.

The students' diversity is recognised and met by their religious, cultural and dietary needs being respected. The school undertakes special meal days and celebrates cultures by holding events such as a Mexican meal and quiz. The school no longer attends church on a Sunday as it was seen to be irrelevant to the overseas boarders. The pupils attend a church service every Friday taken by the local vicar.

The size of the boarding operation ensures that those children who for various reasons are struggling to 'fit in' are supported and monitored so that they do not become isolated. The school works hard to ensure that all pupils are treated as equals with out any imbalance of power. The school looks to promote all of the pupils' skills and talents.

Clear guidance is in place for members of staff to follow with regard to appreciating and acknowledging different cultural and religious backgrounds and this ethos is spread throughout the school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The students have numerous opportunities to share their views on how they feel they are being cared for and what they would like to improve. The formal forums include the school council and the boarding council. Both consist of pupils chosen by their peers to represent their views to key senior members of staff such as the head teacher and heads of boarding. Thorough minutes are kept of the meetings which contain full agendas. The students said they were able to make decisions about what happens at the weekend.

Students boarding in the school are able to contact families and friends via telephone and email as well as being encouraged to write letters. Students whose families live abroad and in different time zones are allowed to telephone their parents at times that are convenient to the young people and their families. Emails and telephone conversations are carried out in private and the right for students to have privacy during these times is acknowledged and protected.

The school has a student's introduction package and visits can be arranged for new pupils to visit the school. On arrival the students do spend time with boarders who have been at the school for some time. The older students offer guidance and mentoring towards the youngest pupils. The students confirmed that they had received information about the school before starting and had also visited. Boarders also said that they had felt supported by both other boarders and staff when they had started at the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Students are able to keep personal possessions secure in lockable safes provided by the school. Additionally they all have their own bedside cabinets and lockers for storing clothes.

The school provides a pocket money system which is run by the heads of boarding. The students are encouraged to think about how much money they need to take out and spend.

The dormitories are spacious and satisfactory in appearance. There is a collection of both bunk beds and single beds, each student has some storage space. The students are able to personalise their personal space with posters and pictures. The dormitories are tidied by the students and are kept clean by the domestic staff. The communal rooms have been established as specific areas for the students to use but all have the appearance of needing renovation to make them comfortable and homely. The communal areas in the house such as the hallways also need new carpeting and redecoration.

There are adequate numbers of sinks and showers available for the students. The bathrooms and toilet spaces are clean and the students did not complain of any problems of bathrooms being unclean or lacking in privacy. The students said the showers were good and there was always hot water. Although when tested the water temperature were found to be variable in different bathrooms and shower rooms. Members of staff have separate toilet and shower facilities. Live in staff have their own accommodation in the building.

There is a team of senior staff who meet regularly to discuss the refurbishment and repairs needed throughout the school. A development plan could be seen and the boarding house is undergoing renovation and decoration. The refurbishment programme is on going with a rolling programme of upgrading the boarding facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The different backgrounds of the students living in the school are celebrated and enjoyed and seen as an opportunity to learn about each other. Each student's individuality is acknowledged and valued, whether this be a cultural or religious difference or an individual ability to excel in a specific area. The acknowledgement of the importance of difference and how this can enrich everyone's experience is embedded in the school.

There is a very well presented and attractive prospectus which clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the school and what students and parents can expect. All the students have a handbook which is also very clear as to what living at the school entails and what the routines, rules and systems are.

The size of the boarding operation and the fact that boarding takes place in one part of the building means that the organisation of boarding is consistent and safe. There is a divide between the senior and junior boys. The standard of accommodation does vary throughout the house.

The staff responsible for boarding provide a good balance of supervision for the students. The supervision of those boarding is discrete and does not impinge on privacy. The level of supervision does vary, bearing in mind the differing ages of the students and their need for guidance and prompting in some areas.

The safety of the children who board is protected by having a robust risk assessment process which is checked by those responsible for the boarding area, the member of staff responsible for health and safety issues and the head teacher. All members of staff liaise with each other on an informal and formal basis. Forums in which meetings are held include a health and safety committee in which related areas are discussed. Other meetings include the senior management meeting and boarding staff meeting.

Records are checked and endorsed by the members of staff responsible for them and are then checked and endorsed by the head teacher. This ensures that the head teacher is very much involved in the oversight and management of the school whilst sharing and delegating responsibilities. Records which the head teacher monitors and endorses include records of punishments, staff recruitment and risk assessments. The school also has a system which

highlights any students which may need additional monitoring and support and this information is disseminated to the appropriate staff members.

There is a comprehensive staff handbook which outlines policies and guidance with regard to boarding and the welfare of students in the school. New members of staff have a clear induction process and this involves training in child protection with an emphasis on duties of care and the supervision of those students who board. The school policies outline who is responsible for reviewing staff performance and training and this is also outlined in their job description. Formal supervision is provided for those working within the boarding house.

The level of communication between all members of staff in the school is good. Each student's needs, concerns and idiosyncrasies are known to the staff. The staff team is managed and supported by a senior management team who are experienced and knowledgeable and provide excellent oversight of the running of the school.

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 that staff responsible for the medical bay have specific training to understand the complex needs of the students (NMS 15)
- ensure safer recruitment guidance is followed when employing staff (NMS 38.2)
- ensure that a single record of fire evacuation drills is maintained that and drills are held in the evening (NMS 26.1)
- ensure those who live at the school who are not employed have written agreements that contain the required information (NMS 39.4)