

Orwell park School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Linda Brown / Claudette Morgan
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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

Orwell Park has been an established preparatory school for over a century. It is co-educational providing education and boarding for children from seven to 13 years.

The boarding accommodation is located on the upper floors in the main part of the school. The large, four story building is used for classrooms, administration, boarding and dining purposes. There are additional classroom facilities, sports pitches, an outdoor swimming pool and extensive grounds leading down to the River Orwell.

In recent years the school has developed a more flexible approach to boarding, this has been done on the basis of demand. The majority of the pupils families live relatively near, and therefore, do not require boarding on a full-time basis. The school provides full-time boarding for a small group of pupils whose families are either located further away or they have come to study at the school from abroad.

Summary

The purpose of this inspection was to inspect the key standards in line with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and monitor to the progress made in meeting recommendations. Recommendations were made at the previous inspection against out come areas; Being Healthy; Staying Safe; Positive Contribution; Economic Wellbeing and Organisation. The inspection took place over three days, detailed pre-inspection information was provided (prior to the inspection) by the head of boarding. Questionnaires were received from staff, parents, visitors, children and governors of the school.

Judgements made at this inspection are outstanding for Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving and Organisation. Economic Wellbeing and Positive Contribution are judged as good. Recommendations made at this inspection are under outcome areas Being Healthy, Staying Safe and Economic Wellbeing.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

It is evident that the management team are committed to improving the service as action has been taken to address the seven recommendations made at the previous inspection. This practice safeguards and promotes the welfare of children.

Systems are in place for boarders to summons staff if they are unwell during the night. The recruitment of gap students follows the same process as any member of staff. If Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) or equivalent checks are unavailable then gap students are not recruited. The headmaster responsible for child protection has a clear understanding of the safeguarding referral system. New systems have been introduced to enable foreign students to contact their families, taking into consideration the time differences. Staff and children report this system is working well. A new management structure has been introduced into the boarding house. Staff, pupils and parents have a clear understanding of the system and who to contact if problems arise. The final recommendation was in relation to the storage of valuables. A facility is now available for borders to safely store their valuables.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The menus are planned on a weekly basis to include a variety of fresh and seasonal ingredients. The lunch time menu consists of a choice of three meals including a vegetarian option. In addition, a salad bar is provided daily. Staff know the preferences and needs of the pupils. Meals provided take account of special diets, for example, allergies, intolerances, cultural and religious preferences and these are managed sensitively. Discussion takes place with the chef during the admission process to ensure they are able to cater for the individual dietary requirements of the child. Fresh fruit and drinks are available at all times and staff follow healthy eating guidelines. Children speak positively about the food provided and are aware of the healthy options available. They state that they are encouraged to eat a balanced diet. These arrangements ensure that pupils have access to a healthy diet which meets their individual needs and preferences.

There are excellent arrangements for ensuring that the health and welfare of pupils is promoted. The school has a Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme which ensures children receive age appropriate information on health related topics. A detailed course is provided for year eight pupils who show a good understanding and knowledge of the training they receive. The school seeks health information and medical consent for each student by means of a questionnaire from parents, who are also requested to update the school of any changes to health, medication or dietary requirements. The matron is currently contacting parents to ensure all information in children's files is up-to-date and accurate. Health information is available and appropriately stored, however, files do not contain a running log of illnesses, appointments and outcomes.

An excellent tutor system operates for children throughout the school, providing additional individual support. Children enjoy participating in exercise through a range of sports available to them. Sports facilities at the school are accessible during the evenings where organised activities take place in the school gymnasium.

The matron system provides 24 hour care for the children. The matrons ensure all boarding pupils are registered with a local doctor unless parents wish to make alternative arrangements. The doctor holds weekly surgeries at the school and, in addition, a matron or a member of staff will accompany pupils to the doctor or other medical appointments when necessary. A surgery and sick bay is available for children to be appropriately cared for if they are unwell. Children speak positively about the care they receive when they are unwell. Some parental feedback questionnaires highlighted concerns regarding the systems in place for children if they are unwell during the night. New systems have been implemented to address these concerns. Children of all ages fully understand the new systems and are confident they will be well cared for if they are ill. There are very good arrangements, including policies and procedures and systems for staff communication to ensure the safe storage and administration of prescribed and non-prescribed medication. The school benefits from having a qualified nurse as the senior matron who works closely with the head of boarding to ensure the health needs of children are fully supported and addressed. Boarding staff are trained in first aid. This practice ensures the welfare of children is safeguarded.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

There are policies and procedures covering privacy and confidentiality. The staff are able to demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of them in their day-to-day practice. Staff show an awareness of children's individual needs. Confidential information is shared appropriately on a need to know basis. Information regarding the boarders is stored in a secure location.

There are very good arrangements to ensure that boarders are protected from bullying. Children have an excellent understanding of the need to report any incidents of bullying. Staff have a good awareness and monitor closely any concerns they may have. Children are confident that any issues will be dealt with immediately. Support is available to both the bully and the victim.

The headmaster is currently the designated person responsible for any issues of child protection in the school. He is able to demonstrate an excellent knowledge and understanding of the procedures and guidance for contacting other relevant professional bodies involved in the management of safeguarding concern. All boarding staff receive training in child protection matters and policies and procedures are available. Staff understand these procedures and the importance of reporting concerns. Peer listeners and independent listeners are given guidance and advice regarding the handling of confidential information. Children given roles of responsibility also receive the relevant training.

Generally children are very happy to be at the school, therefore, the risk of a child going missing is minimal. However, good guidance is available for reporting a missing child and staff have a good knowledge of the procedure. The welfare of children is promoted because staff are trained and are aware of the policies and procedures in place to safeguard them.

There are fair systems for the use of discipline. These are separate from the systems used in the school. The level of sanctions imposed is minimal. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the individual children. Any potential behavioural concerns are well monitored. The positive relationships between staff and children significantly reduce the need for sanctions. There is clear information for pupils in relation to the likely sanctions for various offences. Children are aware of the system and sanctions in place and believe that they are fair. Records are maintained which are regularly monitored by the head of boarding and, in addition, are monitored termly by the deputy head of school. There are also various rewards for positive behaviour, including a boarding award which is presented at the end of each week by the dormitory captains. The systems in place ensure the welfare of the children is safeguarded.

The children are aware of the complaints procedure and what to do if they are unhappy about something or someone. Information for parents is provided in the handbook. Staff are keen to address any minor concerns immediately, before they reach the complaint stage. A 'worry box' is available for children who may feel unable to discuss their concerns; contact details for independent listeners are displayed near the pay phone and in the boarder's handbook. Children confidently listed the people who they can go to, and feel their concerns will be heard by staff at the school. However, they are aware of how to contact the independent listeners if the need were to arise. Records of formal and informal complaints are appropriately maintained and monitored. Children's welfare is promoted because they are clear about how to make a complaint. There is an effective and robust system in place to record, address and resolve any concerns made known by young people.

There are good arrangements to ensure the physical safety of students in the house, including regular testing of electrical items, servicing of equipment; fire drills and weekly alarm tests.

Risk assessments are detailed and comprehensive. Recent improvements to the school's alarm system are ongoing and are part of the school's development plan. Boarders are well prepared for emergency evacuations because staff and boarders have a good understanding of the procedures which they practice regularly.

Good recruitment records are now in place, staff files contain all relevant checks, to include, a full work history, references and a Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check. Evidence of references being verified is unavailable, however, the staff responsible for the completion of the necessary checks are able to demonstrate that systems to develop and improve recruitment practice are ongoing. All adults having unsupervised contact with the children, for example, the independent listeners, governors and gap students, are subject to CRB checks.

Young people are safeguarded and protected from abuse because the headmaster ensures there is careful selection and vetting of all staff working at the school. The headmaster takes the security of the pupils and boarders at the school very seriously. Good systems ensure the identity of visitors to the school is checked, a signing in and out system is in place and clear guidance is given to staff and parents for collecting children outside of normal school hours. Alarm systems and security gates are activated at night.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is an excellent tutor system working throughout the school. Children speak positively about this system. They state their views are sought before tutors are allocated and they feel confident that they are able to seek advice and share their concerns with their tutors. The quality of the pastoral care at the school is high and in addition to the tutor, there are a range of support systems, for example the peer listeners, independent listeners, boarding staff and matron. Questionnaires received from parents and children all praise the pastoral care provided at the school. The numbers of telephone support services are prominently displayed near to the pay phone.

Equality and diversity are promoted within the school and the boarding house. Children come from a variety of cultures and are of both genders. Minority groups are supported, made to feel welcome and integrated into the life of the school. Religious and cultural festivals are celebrated and the menus reflect the diversity of the school.

Boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas available to them both inside the school and in the surrounding school grounds. The school gymnasium enables staff to organise games in the evenings. Squash courts, arts and crafts, board games, computer games, books, story time, DVD and television time are all available. The children look forward to the light nights when a range of outdoor activities are provided within the school grounds. Golf, tennis, team sports, an assault course, games, camping in the forest, barbeques and an outdoor swimming pool are just some of the activities which the boarders participate in. Some questionnaires received from parents stated that they felt there are not enough activities for boarders at weekends. In addition to the activities listed, full boarders are also taken out for both local events and day trips. Prior to the inspection, 48 questionnaires were received from boarders and all but one felt they had enough activities, several boarders commented that they had so many things to do they were tired. Evidence seen shows a range of activities available to children for both flexi and full boarders.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Arrangements for enabling boarders to contribute to the operation of boarding are in place. However, the heads of boarding are keen to develop this practice further. The children are provided with questionnaires which are then analysed and used to form part of the boarding school development plan. There are examples of changes which have been made as a result of listening to boarders' suggestions and these include the creation of a girl's common room. The school council provides another opportunity for boarders to be involved in decision making.

Boarders are enabled to maintain contact with their family members by means of telephone, letters and e-mail. There are two pay telephones in the boarding house. The recommendation at the previous inspection regarding overseas contact is now addressed and these students have access to mobile phones at the appropriate times. The school newsletter provides information about the events of the term and the plans for the next few weeks, to include a section about boarding. Parents are contacted when specific difficulties arise. Parents raised concerns regarding being able to contact the school out of school hours. The head of boarding was aware of the concerns and a fault with the telephone system had created the problem. This had been repaired prior to the inspection and a back up system introduced where senior staff carry a mobile phone at all times.

In addition to the boarder's handbook, new boarders are provided with a chaperone to ensure they are not left alone and support them to understand the main routines and arrangements in the house. A happy, family atmosphere at the school is evident. The relationships between boarders and staff show an excellent balance between caring, having fun and respect for each other. Children of all ages understand the routines and appear happy and relaxed. Several children stated that one of the best parts of being at Orwell Park School was the boarding and when asked, found it difficult to think of any areas that they would like to improve.

The key standards examined in this outcome ensure that the welfare of young people is promoted.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The boarding provision offers dormitories of various sizes. The rooms are separated according to age and gender. Students are encouraged to personalise their rooms and they use posters and photographs to do this. The boarding provision is located above the school within the original house. It is a very old and traditional building which is in need of continual updating and refurbishment. There is an ongoing refurbishment programme in place and several areas have already benefited from this programme. Most of the major repairs have now been completed, for example, the roof and the re-piping to provide a mains water supply and fire alarm system. Work is now taking place inside the house. Several of the dormitories have been refurbished, and many bathrooms now have updated and modernised facilities which include showers, baths and toilets. Not all rooms are completed and this work remains ongoing.

Parents commented on the accommodation and the quality of the beds, however, they also recognise the amount of work taking place to address the issues. All concerns raised have been identified by the school and are part of the refurbishment programme. Improvements to the lounge by redecoration make it bright, cheerful and welcoming. The school facilities, classrooms,

library, computer suite, home economics kitchen and gymnasium provide supervised activities for boarders. The school grounds provide an area where boarders can relax and play sports in the warmer weather.

Boarders are not encouraged to have valuables at school; however, there are good arrangements for ensuring that valuables can be locked away safely if the need arises. Boarders commented that they respect each other's property. Rooms are not locked and pupils are confident they can leave their personal items in their rooms as they would in a family home.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

There is a boarder's and parent's handbook which serves as a detailed guide about boarding. There is also a school prospectus and a website where interested parties can access policies and procedures, in addition to more general information. This information is updated on a regular basis. This ensures that prospective boarders and their representatives know what to expect from the school.

There have been several changes to position of headmaster over the last two years. However, there is a reasonably low turnover of boarding staff. The head of boarding, deputy head of school and many members of staff remained consistent during this period providing a continuity of care for the children who are relatively unaffected by the changes to the head of the school.

A new experienced headmaster has recently been appointed, he is keen to develop the provision and provide consistency for both staff and the pupils at the school. A new appointment to head of girls boarding was made at the start of the winter term. Two assistant heads of boarding are also in post. These positions provide the head of boarding with an excellent support system. Evidence is available of new developments and plans that are being implemented as a result of this experienced management team. Rotas ensure that boarders are adequately supervised by staff at all times. Boarding staff receive appropriate training and informal supervision, in addition to their yearly appraisals. There are policies and procedures to guide their practice. Regular meetings ensure staff are kept informed about issues regarding the boarders and any developments to the boarding provision. There is a very good level of communication between the school, boarding provision and parents. This ensures that boarder's welfare is promoted in a consistent manner.

All staff have job descriptions and are clear of their role. Induction training is available for all staff and this includes key health and safety guidelines and child protection awareness. Each head of department, for example, housekeeping, maintenance and administrative staff are responsible for supervising their team members. Gap students are also supervised by boarding staff. Staff know who they are accountable to.

The boarding provision is well organised, parental questionnaires raised concerns regarding the disruption caused to full boarders on the nights the flexi boarders stay at the school. Consideration to these concerns has already been addressed and dormitories reorganised to ensure full boarders only have limited numbers of flexi boarders sharing their dormitories. A wide range of boarders confirmed they were very happy with the arrangements and enjoyed having the company of the flexi boarders as they are often their friends. Dormitory Captains are also in place, who take pride in their positions and have a clear knowledge and understanding of their role and when it is necessary to call a member of staff. They state that there is always

staff around to support them if there are any issues. Dormitories are age and gender appropriate and bed times are staggered, meaning the younger children's sleep is not disrupted by the older children.

Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for all activities such as camping and barbecues. Risk assessments are regularly monitored to ensure the necessary resources are in place to reduce the potential risk of fire, accident or injury.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

There is a commitment from staff and management to promote quality and diversity. Staff show an awareness and are active in addressing and supporting individuals in all aspects, which include, their cultural, religious and dietary needs.

A clear monitoring system is in place for risk assessments, complaints and punishment and this is usually completed by the deputy head. Any concerns are followed up and the appropriate action is taken to resolve them. The systems in place ensure that the welfare of children is promoted and safeguarded in all the key standards examined in this outcome area.

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 developing the system of recording significant illnesses, accidents or injuries to include an individual log on children's files (NMS 15.13)
- ensure that the recruitment process includes contact being made with referees in order to verify their authenticity (NMS 38.2)
- ensure that the contact details for complaints or concerns provided to borders are correct, with particular regard to the changes from CSCI to Ofsted (NMS 5.4)