

Ranby House School

Inspection report for boarding school

Unique reference number	SC008757
Inspection date	4 February 2009
Inspector	David Morgan
Type of Inspection	Key

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Head / Principal	
Nominated person	
Date of last inspection	7 November 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

Ranby House is a co-educational day and boarding school that is governed by its own school council as part of the Woodard Corporation. Woodard schools are based on a Christian ethos but welcome all faiths. Pupils boarding at the school are aged between seven and 13 years old. The school is set within 60 acres of countryside and has extensive playing fields, purpose built staff accommodation, sports hall, library and 300-seat auditorium, which supplement the main buildings, some of which are of Georgian origin.

There are two 'houses'. The boy's boarding house is located within the main building on the first and second floors, and the girl's boarding house is in a modern, adjacent building. Each boarder is provided with appropriate bed and storage space, and a variety of study facilities are available. Boarders share accommodation and are grouped by age in within 15 dormitories. Boarders have access to telephones and emailing facilities.

There have been a number of changes to senior personnel since September 2008. There is a new headmaster, a new head of boarding, both of whom were previously employed at the school, a new bursar, and new boys' houseparent's.

All the boarding pupils, of which there are approximately 58, were able to contribute to this inspection either in person or via a written survey.

Summary

During this three-yearly key inspection, all the key standards were inspected. Previous recommendations have been addressed and have improved standards in record-keeping, safety and monitoring. The overall judgement, and that for Equality and Diversity, is satisfactory although there are many areas of good practice, some of which is exceptional, and there is the capacity to achieve further improvement.

Children are extremely positive about their school; one said, 'I recommend it for everyone', and another, 'It's a really good, sporting school'. Parents views are largely represented by the comment of one who said, 'The staff are exceptionally understanding'. Children and staff feel the school has a strong sense of community. No complaints have been received by Ofsted.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The recommendations of the previous inspection have been addressed. This has involved up-dating several policies and establishing logs such as that relating to complaints. These measures provide improved guidance to staff and allow more accurate monitoring of boarding standards. Monitoring has also been improved by the governors visiting regularly and recording their findings. Safety has been improved by the fitting of an alarm on the fire escape in the boy's dormitory, and by completing certain staff recruitment checks. Investment in the sick-rooms means that boys and girls now have separate accommodation when they are ill.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Boarders' health is promoted by means of suitable policies that are implemented well in practice. In particular there is a clear personal, social and health education programme undertaken in classes, to which the school nurses contribute. They are also able to contribute important professional input to other health and welfare issues such as emotional difficulties, as occasions arise. Few boarders have needs arising from a disability or their cultural background. The social education of boarders is sound but is, however, insufficiently developed in boarding policies and understood by boarding staff, for example, regarding cultural events and integration with community groups. On the other hand, boarders individual health and welfare issues are identified well and are reflected in personal welfare files. Such files do not indicate, though, who has parental responsibility for each child, which is necessary in some legal situations and to avoid unnecessary embarrassment to children. Boarders' needs are also addressed by means of an efficient laundry.

Attention is paid to ensuring that children learn about gender-specific health issues such as puberty, to which the school nurses contribute. The school nurses, in particular, also manage any medication and first aid issues, including during sports activities on Saturdays. Such procedures are reflected well in written policies that are available to staff. In the event that a boarder is taken ill and cannot go home immediately, there are good sick room facilities for them to use.

Boarders receive excellent catering provision in which fresh produce is emphasised. Food is tasty and well presented. There is always a choice and children understand the elements of a balanced diet. Most boarders feel that the meals are 'great'. There is close attention on a whole-school basis to the individual dietary intake of children, including any special diets. For example, sweets are kept to a minimum and staff ensure that children have sufficiently large portions, which can occasionally be an issue for girls, in particular. Healthy snacks are provided as part of the daily catering provision and children are encouraged to drink enough water.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Boarders' privacy is respected sufficiently, for example, whilst showering, and they are protected particularly well from bullying, including bullying by phone and email. Any issues are addressed promptly and there is full understanding amongst boarders that bullying is unacceptable; a large majority feel it does not occur at Ranby House. Similarly, there are satisfactory procedures in place to protect boarders from abuse, although not all staff have been appropriately trained or briefed on this issue, for example, certain ancillary staff. On the other hand, the child protection officer has received up-to-date training and the policies have been checked by the local authority, which is good practice. Boarders concerns are addressed promptly and effectively and this helps to avoid formal complaints. Boarders report that staff are attentive and ask them if anything is wrong. Additional support is also available to boarders from their peers, for example, when they undertake the role of Leaders on a rotational basis. This is an important way in which boarders learn to take responsibility for others. Boarders are encouraged to accept increasing levels of responsibility as they get older such as being Head of Dorm.

Use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate. There is a clear system for acknowledging positive behaviour and dealing with less constructive actions in both individuals and groups, which is publicly recorded on house notice boards.

Regarding safety in the buildings, boarders are sufficiently protected from the risk of fire by suitable fire detection and fire fighting equipment. Drills are undertaken regularly, although the system for registering ancillary staff during drills is insufficiently robust and the fire risk assessment does not take account of door-wedges. Both of these issues potentially increase the risk to boarders and staff.

Safety is also pursued by satisfactory selection and vetting of staff and other adults working with boarders and the new management team are currently undertaking further improvements. An area requiring attention to ensure the full protection of boarders in this area is the verification of the references for new staff. The site itself and the houses are sufficiently secure from intruders and this is kept under review.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Boarders have access to an excellent range of activities that includes week-end trips and sporting events, which everyone thoroughly enjoys. Boarders praised the sporting and musical opportunities, in particular, and there are good study facilities. Other facilities are outstanding and include a swimming pool, extensive grounds and a sports hall. Each house has its own recreational area as well, where boarders play games or watch DVDs and there are flood-lit areas outside. Besides the facilities, a key part of this success is the good relationships between staff and boarders. Boarders feel very positive about all the staff who, they feel, will always help: one represented many by saying how special she is made to feel. This high level of support includes the provision of an independent person who visits periodically. However, accessibility to this service is under-developed.

Boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination on any grounds, whether it be, for example, religion, culture, disability or gender. There is a strongly implemented ethos of integration and cooperation in the whole school that is reflected in the boarding houses. Similarly, boarders are not subjected to any unusual or onerous demands.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are effective measures to help new boarders become familiar with the school's procedures and operation and to settle in; these include a buddy system, written and verbal information, and, ready availability of pay phones to keep in touch with their families. Subsequently, boarders are enabled to contribute to life in the school in a variety of constructive ways, including the boarders forum, which meets half-termly and has recently reviewed the menus. A high percentage of boarders consider that they have a say about life at school, whether it be in the boarders forum or through surveys or one of the other ways boarders are consulted. Staff consult parents about welfare and recreational issues, although some parents feel that consultation could be improved.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders benefit from attractive, comfortable and well-maintained accommodation and bedrooms. Improvements have been made to the décor throughout, which is bright and attractive. There are differences in presentation between the two buildings and the dormitories

due to the substantial difference in the ages of the buildings and this adds interest and character to the accommodation. Boarders' possessions and money are protected very well and there are no issues of theft; which is a credit to all concerned.

There is a sufficient number of bathrooms and toilets and the use of showers is appropriately monitored by staff whilst taking into account the need for boarders' privacy. Boarders provide their own toiletries but supplies are also kept on site or are obtained by staff, when needed by individual children. The modern changing facilities are exceptionally good.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. There is careful consideration of issues of importance to individual boarders and good liaison between staff, where necessary, for example, regarding dietary issues. Attention is also paid to ensure that equality is maintained between boys and girls in terms of inclusion in sporting activities and in staffing arrangements. Few issues regarding race or disability arise and broader issues are addressed as part of the curriculum.

The new senior management team provides clear leadership of boarding in the school, based on the school's statement of boarding principles. It contributes significantly to the friendly atmosphere in the school but the recommendations in this report reflect the relatively short period in which the senior management team has been in operation. Various improvements are already evident, however, including, for example, more organised meetings between staff and other communication systems. The head of boarding has recently completed a substantial audit of the boarding service against the National Minimum Standards, which identifies tasks and review intervals and provides a firm basis for future progress. Also, there is now regular input and monitoring by a representative of the governors. These are important contributions to the maintenance, improvement, and, to some extent, modernisation of the boarding provision.

Boarders are adequately supervised by staff in the day and the night-time arrangements are also sufficient to ensure they are properly cared for. Boarders are looked after by an enthusiastic staff team consisting of two matrons and four house parents, supplemented by three gap students, who all have specific boarding duties and have access to relevant policies. However, their induction training and other training is not adequately recorded and there are no regular reviews of their boarding practice, which potentially reduces the standard of care provided to boarders. Some gaps in training have been identified and addressed but the supervision meetings of ancillary staff are not sufficiently robust and, for example, have not identified their child protection training needs. The safety of boarders is also addressed through records. Risk assessments and the record of accidents involving children, for example, are compiled by staff, as required, but are not monitored as prescribed. This means that individual issues are addressed but any emergent patterns affecting boarders welfare are potentially overlooked.

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 boarders' records include identification of the persons with parental responsibility for the boarder (NMS 7.3)
- ensure that the policy on social education is appropriate, for example, regarding boarders awareness of and integration with community groups (NMS 6.1)
- ensure that all staff, at all levels, have been given briefing or training on responding to suspicions or allegations of abuse (NMS 3.5)
- ensure that regular fire safety risk assessments are carried out, regarding, for example, the monitoring of ancillary staff during fire evacuations and door wedges (NMS 26.1)
- ensure there is easy access to the independent person (NMS 14.4)
- ensure that staff contact parents about significant issues (NMS 19.5)
- ensure records of risk assessments and accidents, including those involving children, are monitored at least twice a term (NMS 23.2)
- ensure staff with boarding duties receive induction training and regular review of their boarding practice (NMS 34.1)
- ensure there are clear arrangements for the supervision of ancillary staff and any volunteers, which take into account, for example, their training needs (NMS 34.3).