

Bilton Grange School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Carole Moore
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Date of last inspection	08/02/2008

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

The school is situated outside the village of Dunchurch, approximately three miles from Rugby and with easy access to the M1 and M6 motorways.

Bilton Grange was founded in 1873 as a boarding school for boys, but now operates on a co-educational basis with a pre-preparatory department. The school provides education for children from age four to 13 years. Boarding is offered to children above eight years old, and many pupils access boarding on a weekly or more flexible basis. Among those who board are pupils from overseas.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an announced inspection which looked at the key boarding school national minimum standards under the Every Child Matters outcome groups.

The overall outcome judgement is outstanding. The outcome judgements in being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and organisation are outstanding. The outcome area for economic well-being is judged as good. There are no recommendations made as a result of this inspection.

The school is outstanding. Boarding children's safety and protection are paramount. Pastoral care is exceptional and threaded throughout the school, delivered by a dedicated staff team. A range of staff across the school work exceptionally well together to meet the pastoral needs of the children and a qualified nurse ensures that health and medical needs are well met. There is an extensive range of activities for children to enjoy and opportunities to contribute to the development of boarding through regular consultation. Children are happy and do well.

Parents have said: 'The boarding provision is a significant part of our child's education in the broadest sense and we are delighted that our child is so well looked after.'

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in 2008, it was recommended that the school obtain, for each gap student employed, a 'certificate of good conduct' or equivalent from the relevant authorities of the student's home country where such facilities are available. This now takes place for all gap students.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

High standards are in place and children receive excellent health care services. This provides accomplished care that meets children's diverse needs.

Children understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and staff act as positive role models in promoting healthy choices. Children stay in a bright, airy and spacious environment with excellent grounds and have plenty of opportunities for fresh air and play. The school encourages responsible choices and children learn about taking care of themselves through an extensive personal, social and health education programme. The school has comprehensive records that have been developed by the school nurse. The health records are an integral part of the surgery procedure and ensure that there is a real understanding of the individual child's medical needs. Records are kept securely. Medical conditions are recorded on children's individual paper files and on the central school system. This ensures that all relevant staff are aware of health implications that might affect a boarding child's welfare. The children's medication is managed correctly and staff practice is consistent with the school's guidelines and procedures. This ensures that the handling of medication is given utmost priority. To promote good hygiene and reduce the spread of any infections, dispensers of hand sanitizer are located at various parts of the school for everyone to use.

Children receive good quality and choice in the catering provision. The school has its own catering team who is responsible for the preparation and organisation of the meal times. Staff sit with children at meal times and children experience meals as a sociable event. All meals are carefully prepared and the school encourages healthy eating. There is always fresh fruit available and special diets are catered for successfully. Children can also prepare late suppers in their boarding area which include food such as bread, fresh fruit and a range of hot and cold drinks. Children have enough food, have choice and most say they like it.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a proactive approach to safeguarding practice that gives children a strong sense of safety and well-being. Staff balance a good parenting approach with the need to protect children. There is highly effective policy, procedure and staff training and staff know what to do in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse to ensure that all are safe. The school takes good note of wider guidance regarding safeguarding measures and ensures an integrated approach which encompasses all areas of children's daily life.

Children feel that the school respects their privacy and that their concerns are taken seriously. The school has a clear complaints procedure and information about this is available to children and parents through written material and the school's website.

There is also a leaflet, 'helping hands', which is given to all pupils when they first arrive at the school. Children state that the school responds quickly to any concerns raised by them: 'There is always someone to help.'

Children are cared for in a warm, friendly and safe atmosphere. Staff and children know that bullying is not tolerated and that staff act on any information that bullying might be taking place. Boarding children did not identify bullying as a problem. Children show great respect and regard for each other and this is fostered and encouraged by staff.

Children's behaviour is exemplary throughout the school. Staff understand how to encourage good behaviour, which is actively rewarded, and inappropriate behaviour is addressed in a very fair and measured way. There are clear guiding principles to ensure the smooth running of the school community. Children understand that the school has high expectations whereby all children are expected to be honest, considerate, courteous and tolerant. Throughout the school day and in the boarding houses they achieve this well. The emphasis placed on caring behaviour, citizenship and positive thinking is reflected throughout the school and boarding houses. The effectiveness of this system is outstanding and children strive to do their best and seek the praise and rewards from the school staff. Children are rewarded with good marks for consistently doing the 'right thing' without a fuss and acting as a good role model.

The school has excellent systems and structures in place to maintain safe practices and fulfil health and safety obligations. There is a health and safety officer who ensures risk assessments for the premises and activities are comprehensive and successfully detail how staff manage risks. The Headmaster also quality assures all risk assessments. Children understand that staff are responsible for their safety and acknowledge that staff successfully balance their welfare, while developing their independence and access to an extensive range of activities. Children learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they regularly practise the emergency escape drill. The management team has an excellent overview of health and safety matters, which are regularly reviewed to ensure full compliance. The security and access to boarding houses are very successfully managed and visitors are always checked and signed in and out of the buildings.

Staff, volunteers and gap students are safely recruited through rigorous selection and vetting procedures which are properly recorded and include all necessary checks. The school does not allow any member of staff to work unsupervised without satisfactory checks. Consequently children confirm they feel safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

A strength of this school is the outstanding range of activities made available to children offering them excitement, fun and opportunities. The school grounds and facilities provide for many on-site activities and there are frequent trips to local

attractions and events particularly at the weekend. A swimming pool, sports hall, variety of playing fields, art studio, and music, are just some of the facilities available. Every evening after some study there is a programme of activities to choose from or the option for children to plan their own free time with friends. Through activities that focus on challenges and new experiences, children learn about leadership and working together to achieve for a team, a group and their community, not just as individuals. Children say the school is good at 'encouraging you and stretching you in the things you're good at', 'we have lots of fun and many laughs,' 'school is good,' and 'you make really good friendships'.

The pastoral care given to boarding children is another outstanding feature of this school. The Headmaster and his wife are actively involved in school life and ensure that they are available to children and staff. The leadership of the school promotes a family environment and this is a strength which parents most appreciate. Children can identify several staff that they feel they can approach with any problems or concerns. These include tutors, houseparents, matrons, gap students and pupil buddies who ensure their continual care needs are well met. The staff across the school work well together providing a safe homely environment where children feel supported and cared for. Parents report very high levels of satisfaction with the pastoral care with comments such as, 'a friendly, homely and lively style', and 'an excellent team', and 'my sons enjoys everything about the school'. The Learning Support Centre is a central resource to the school, offering support and guidance to children and staff. Support may be given with learning, organisational skills and extra study to keep up with their class. Individual child profiles act as useful documents to identify what support is required and how it can be delivered. This provides useful information to teachers and boarding house staff.

Children readily participate in formal worship and assemblies, which are rooted in the Christian ethos of the school. Participation in musical experiences, appreciation of art and literature are key aspects of their spiritual enrichment. Children develop an awareness of their own culture and that of others and begin to appreciate cultural diversity through food, assemblies and the overseas boarding children.

Staff acknowledge and support each child as an individual and challenge discrimination. The atmosphere is inclusive and recognises positive differences. Children say they have great support and they make clear that the school ethos is about valuing the contributions of others too.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school is an inclusive community in which children feel safe and valued. Parents value this 'strong focus of community' and children clearly make firm friends and appear happy and open in their relationships. Communication between adults and children, and between the school and parents, is a real strength.

Children's contribution to the running of the school and boarding houses is

outstanding. There is an excellent range of channels through which children can express their views and feelings. These include the school council, boarding meetings, suggestion boxes and wish lists. Children understand the purpose of these meetings and value initiatives introduced as a result of them. These have included crumpets and the reintroduction of hot chocolate to name but a few.

Children are enabled to maintain contact with their parents and families by telephone, emails and other electronic means. The school ensures that safeguards are in place when using email and the internet.

New boarding children in all age groups are supported sensitively, experiencing visits before they start where they are introduced to another pupil or 'buddy' as their guide to look after them. Colourful and informative handbooks for children and parents include photographs depicting boarding life. The school website is very well structured and updated regularly. All staff contribute to the pastoral approach to support boarding children who experience home sickness; this was reflected in a boarder's comment: 'Everyone is kind and considerate towards you especially when you are new.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school's overall standard of accommodation for its boarding children is good. There are two houses, which differ in design and identity. The accommodation is comfortable and feels really homely. Children say they feel relaxed, comfortable and at home in their surroundings. The furnishing and décor in the houses create a homely atmosphere and most children are happy with their bedrooms. Staff want pupils to feel like it is a home from home and children say they love their bedrooms and the common rooms: 'Boarding is fun.' All accommodation is maintained to a good standard by a team of support staff and it is clean and well presented.

The school has a development plan in place for refurbishment of the boarding houses and this demonstrates commitment by the school to raising standards and promoting boarding. The governors have a keen eye on the development and improvement of boarding provision.

The grounds that surround the school are beautifully maintained and offer children a safe environment in which to relax or enjoy the numerous activities that can be carried out on site.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The management and organisation of the school's welfare and boarding provision are outstanding. The school has a sustained track record for delivering excellent outcomes for boarding children. The collective leadership of the school is highly

accomplished. The Headmaster and the boarding team have a sharp focus on the welfare of children which is always high on the agenda of the school. Boarding is successfully integrated into school life.

The dedicated boarding staff are accessible, committed, trained and enthusiastic about their work. Children benefit because it produces an open and trusting ethos and children feel able to approach any member of staff and are confident in the knowledge that they are treated and respected as an individual.

Regular monitoring of risk assessments, major punishments, complaints and accidents by the Headmaster and senior management team ensures that school recordkeeping effectively contributes to overall welfare provision. The Headmaster confidently communicates high expectations to staff about the quality of children's care. In response the staff team work well to ensure that the young people are well cared for, well educated and enabled to reach their potential. Children describe the school as 'great', and say staff are 'very supportive'.

Each boarding house is managed well and has its own identity while following the same school policies and procedures. The children respond well to the structure and enjoy their experience of boarding at the school. The level of supervision of children is good with regular registration, good staffing ratios, and children report that they can always find a member of staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The learning support department ensures that the curriculum is accessible to all through a wide range of assistance. Children from overseas are integrated well into the boarding community and throughout the school, where difference is celebrated. Based on Christian principles, the school welcomes pupils from all faiths and supports them in religious observance of their choice.

Parents and children have an excellent range of information about the school, through its prospectus, website and additional boarding handbooks that describe the principles and operation of boarding.