

# Durham School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Lynne Busby
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<b>Nominated person</b>	
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	6 February 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

Durham school is a co-educational independent school for day and boarding pupils. The school is long established and provides full-time and flexible boarding facilities for 100 pupils ranging from 11 to 18 years of age during term time. Durham school offers independent education to children from the North East of England and further afield, including China, Germany and other countries.

There are three separate boarding houses on the school site. The girls' boarding house is called Pimlico House and there are two boys' boarding houses, Poole House and School House. The latter is for weekly boarders. The boarding houses are managed by housemasters and housemistresses who live on site and resident tutors, day tutors and matrons.

The school is set in its own grounds, which include a chapel, sports facilities and a swimming pool. It is positioned close to the centre of the city of Durham enabling easy access to shops, leisure facilities and public transport. It is close to the railway station.

### Summary

This was an announced inspection assessing the school's performance against the Every Child Matters outcomes for boarding pupils. The inspection included a check on the school's progress in meeting the recommendations made at the last inspection. The inspection covered all of the key national minimum standards.

The school is well managed and there is a supportive governing body. There is good communication between all staff. The boarders are provided with very good health care, particularly those boarding pupils with more complex health needs. Child protection is managed effectively through links with outside agencies. The ethos of respect in the school is reflected in the pupils' good behaviour and they represent the school well. The school is outstanding in welcoming and celebrating the diversity of boarders and pupils are integrated well into the school.

As a result of this inspection some shortfalls were identified. A small number of support staff have not received specific training in child protection; when recruiting new staff, the school contacts each referee to verify details given in applications, but does not always receive it in writing; and three support staff have not had a recent appraisal or supervision meeting to discuss their performance.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection a number of recommendations were made. Policies and procedures for health care have been reviewed and take account of the different ethnic backgrounds of boarding pupils. Staff in the medical centre have access to training to update their knowledge and skills. There has been a review of how the beds in the sanatorium have been organised. Nurses' personal identification numbers have been checked and criminal record bureau checks are undertaken and qualifications are checked before new staff are appointed.

A head of boarding has been appointed who is taking responsibility for the strategic management of the boarding houses. This is a relatively new post and staff supervision and training are developing.

Links with the local authority designated officer for child protection and the Local Safeguarding Children Board are in place. All the teaching staff have undertaken training in child protection and cyber bullying. Further training is planned, including for all support staff.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Boarding pupils' health needs are promoted and met to a very high standard. School nurses provide excellent support, which is valued by the pupils. Nursing staff have access, as necessary, to other health professionals such as the diabetic nurse. Boarding pupils are registered with local general practitioners and can see either a male or female doctor. Older pupils can make their own appointments. Pupils with complex health requirements are well cared for and nurses are well informed about their specific needs. Very good health care plans are in place. Medical consents are in place for non-prescription medication and a good quality health questionnaire is completed annually by parents, which keeps staff informed of the current health needs of pupils. First aid and treatment of minor illnesses is administered by competent and trained staff. Communication between the boarding house staff and nursing staff about medication needs is good, and this helps ensure that pupils are kept healthy and safe.

Boarding pupils are encouraged by staff to live healthily, including highlighting the importance of avoiding smoking, alcohol, substance misuse and of the importance of protecting themselves from harm. Personal, social and health education is done in small age-related tutor groups, which gives pupils an opportunity to discuss sensitive issues. Nursing staff use their specialist health knowledge and skills to assist in these sessions.

The quality of the food provided to boarding pupils is good. There is a range of healthy options, including fresh fruit and vegetables. The meals served take account of any cultural, health and special dietary needs of boarders, including through themed events and celebrations such as the Chinese New Year. A small number of boarding pupils raised a concern that sandwiches and orange juice at suppers and break have been stopped and commented that a few boarders felt that portion sizes were not always adequate. Menus are available and rotated on a four weekly basis. The catering department is going through a period of change and these issues have either been identified or acted upon by the school.

The dining room provides sufficient space for boarding pupils to dine and they have time to finish their meal properly. Boarding pupils use the kitchens in their boarding houses to prepare snacks and drinks also.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The ethos of the school ensures that pupils respect each other and this is evident in their behaviour. They are a credit to the school and themselves in the way that they behave and present themselves. Sanctions are used rarely and are seen as fair by pupils. Significant issues of behaviour are dealt with by the headteacher who keeps a record of any sanctions used. The clearly written policy for managing behaviour includes a suitable section on the use of restraint,

and this has not been used or needed since the previous inspection. The school has a clear policy on bullying, which if it occurs is dealt with firmly but positively. Pupils have a range of people to whom they can go at any time if they have any concerns and pupils are asked to contribute their views to regular checks on the arrangements in place to prevent bullying.

The arrangements for protecting children are known to staff and are supported by good child protection procedures, which include a procedure in case a child goes missing without authority. The head of boarding has developed links with the local authority safeguarding officer, and the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and any concerns are raised with the appropriate agencies. Staff are aware of what to do if they have any concerns or if concerns are raised with them, although a small number of support staff have not had designated child protection training.

An accessible complaint procedure is available for parents and pupils, and pupils know how to make a complaint. Complaint records are kept by the headteacher. These records demonstrate that complaints are responded to promptly and agreed complaint procedures are adhered to.

The recruitment and selection of staff is satisfactory and criminal records bureau checks are made before a member of staff is employed. In one instance noted during the inspection, a written reference from a second referee was not received before appointment, although contact with the referee was made by telephone.

Visitors to school are properly identified and the movement of any on-site contractors managed carefully to protect the pupils. Taxi drivers and other adults having contact with them have up-to-date criminal record bureau checks. Site security is good.

The privacy of boarding pupils is respected. Staff knock on their doors before entering bedrooms. Boarders can go to their rooms to spend quiet time without any intrusion. Showers are lockable.

Suitable risk assessments are in place for fire risks and for the building and grounds. Maintenance records are kept well and fire and evaluation procedures are well managed. Boarding pupils know what to do in the event of a fire. Some pupils said during the inspection that the fire bell was not always audible when in the shower or on the top floor of Poole House and this was dealt with by the estates manager immediately.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

The school has an integrated international community and welcomes pupils from different faiths. Pupils can practice their own religions and are supported in this by staff. The school is sensitive to the religious, cultural and special needs of pupils, which is a real strength of the school. Boarding pupils, for whom English is not their first language, receive excellent support. The boarding pupils are involved in a variety of fund raising and sporting activities, and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, which involves them in activities in the wider community.

The boarding pupils have excellent relationships with the boarding staff. There are a range of people to whom the pupils can speak if they have any concerns. This includes an independent listener and the Chaplain. The Chaplain is based in the medical centre and pupils can go to discuss any issues privately. Importantly, it is made clear to boarding pupils when and when

not confidentiality can be assured. A system of personal tutoring provides regular opportunities for boarding pupils to discuss academic and personal matters.

There is a good range of activities in the evenings, which includes swimming, drama, music and model making but some boarders would like more choice at the weekends, particularly on Sundays. There is a good range of sporting activities available. Boarders have sufficient and suitable free time each day.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Information for boarding pupils is helpful and provides a clear insight into the school. Pupils say they feel welcome when they come to the school. There is a good induction into the school with an 'acquaint' event, which gives them good opportunity to familiarise themselves with the school and staff.

Boarders can contribute their views to the operation of boarding in the school. For example, boarding pupils in one house had their views taken into account before the recent redecoration of the common room. House meetings, school council meetings and individual consultation give boarding pupils opportunities to make their views known.

Parents can contact the school if they have any concerns and boarding pupils keep in contact with their parents through telephone, email and letters. Staff contact parents if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare. Telephones are available in boarding house areas that afford boarders privacy and contact numbers for help lines are visible near phones. Most boarding pupils have their own mobile phones.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Houses are clean, homely and comfortable. Overall they are well decorated and furnishings are good. The rooms are well lit, heated and ventilated. There are communal areas in where boarders can relax, watch television and play games. There are kitchen facilities where snacks can be made. The boarding pupils' rooms are of a good size and in most rooms only two pupils share. There is space for wardrobes and drawers, and pupils can personalise their own area.

The showers in Pimlico and School House are maintained well although in Poole House some boys had concerns about the showers on the ground and middle floors. The school are looking at refurbishing these showers to provide better facilities in this boarding house.

Boarding pupils' possessions and money are protected, including by providing pupils with a lockable storage facility. If they have valuables, pupils can give them to house staff for safe keeping.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Leadership and governance of the school are effective and focused, achieving positive outcomes for the pupils. A statement of boarding principles is available to parents, pupils and staff. Very good information for new boarders gives helpful information on all aspects of the school. There is a good handbook for boarding staff, which includes clear policies and procedures. The

headteacher and designated senior staff monitor complaints, sanctions and accidents and identify trends in such areas as bullying to ensure that boarding pupils are safe and well cared for.

The boarding houses are well organised and the facilities available to boarders are good. There are no major discrepancies between the quality of boarding provision for boys and girls and any identified are being addressed. Staff are sufficient in number and pupils do not report any times when they cannot see a staff member. The staff rota is displayed in all boarding houses. Staff have job descriptions, which outline their duties clearly. Staff performance is appraised annually but three support staff have not yet had a performance review. This is being addressed and further training for key staff on managing the performance of others is planned.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The ethos of mutual respect, which underpins all of the school's work, encourages all pupils and staff to treat one another well and not to discriminate. All boarders are provided with opportunities to reach their full potential.

## 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 any remaining support staff have been briefed or trained on what to do if they encounter suspicions or allegations of abuse (NMS 3.5)
- keep a written record of all references provided by referees before a staff appointment (NMS 38.2)
- provide all boarding staff with a regular review of their performance (NMS 34.5).