

Moira House Girls School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Liz Driver
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Nominated person	Lesley Watson
Date of last inspection	28 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

Moira House is a school that takes girls from two years old to 18 years old. Full, weekly or flexi boarding is offered from the age of 10. The school is situated on the outskirts of Eastbourne. Boarding accommodation comprises of two individual houses located on the school site.

Summary

This was a key announced inspection. The school provides good pastoral care where every girl is given equal worth and opportunity. A very high percentage of boarders are from overseas and staff are very culturally sensitive to their needs. Health provision is strong with sensitive and caring staff for the girls to access. The school aims high and achieves high in keeping the girls safe. Good structures are in place to support staff in doing this. There are numerous avenues for the girls to access if they have a problem and staff are very supportive in accessing the correct professionals where indicated. Accommodation ranges from good to satisfactory with plans to upgrade some areas of School house in the near future. The accommodation for sick boarders is also in need of some upgrading.

The food provision could be improved especially the vegetarian option. It is acknowledged that the catering department is working hard with the boarders to address this.

Changes to legislation relating to recruitment have been taken on board by the school ensuring staff are recruited safely; however the school needs to continue with updating all police checks from list 99 to criminal records bureau checks.

The organisation of the school is strong with clear structure and understanding of individual responsibilities. The new boarding house mistresses have settled in well and are very much liked by the boarders.

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 the school was asked to ensure all required recruitment checks were carried out satisfactorily. The current recruitment procedures are robust with a rolling programme of renewal for criminal records bureau checks. The school is also up to date with the changes regarding the introduction of the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

Tours of the boarding houses showed that all fire doors were kept closed and that no substances hazardous to health were stored in unlocked cupboards. No items were seen stored in inappropriate places, which was commented on at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The boarders receive very good health provision. Information is gained about boarders health before they arrive and is updated throughout their stay at the school. Boarders are cared for by sympathetic, understanding and caring staff. Boarders receive good first aid service with first aid qualified staff and a qualified nurse available. Boarders have access to a female general

practitioner together with appointments made for dental and optical needs. Medication administration is strong with very good protocols, practice and record keeping. Some older boarders are able to self administer medicines in accordance with the school's self administration policy and procedures that are closely monitored. The school ensures all girls are able to participate in national immunisation programmes on offer. There is a designated sick bay for ill boarders that is in need of some upgrading. Records of significant illnesses, accidents or injuries are kept. The school has an emergency plan in place for major incidents should one occur.

The school has an extensive programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) with very clear policies on promoting non use of smoking and alcohol. There is a suitable and age appropriate programme for the promotion of healthy and safe lifestyles.

The catering provision is, in general, good although the boarders did raise views regarding some areas that they felt could be improved on. Boarders who prefer a vegetarian diet state that the choice almost always has cheese in it and they would like a more varied vegetarian choice. The catering department is working well with the boarders to make changes to the menus and shows a commitment in listening to suggestions raised. Boarders are able to participate in the food committee meetings. The catering department can cater for special dietary needs and is developing menus to celebrate festivals from around the world. The dining room is of a suitable size to cater for the number of boarders. All catering staff are trained in good food hygiene handling. The last Environmental Health inspection was in September 2009 with requirements that the school need to complete within set timescales.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There are clear procedures in place for students, parents and staff to follow if they wish to make a complaint. Boarders reported that they felt listened to and that they have numerous avenues to access if they wish to complain.

Boarders live in an environment where bullying is taken very seriously with very low numbers of incidents reported. There are numerous avenues which boarders can use if they feel they or another boarder are being subjected to bullying behaviour. Incidents of potential or actual bullying are addressed in a sensitive manner and resolved quickly. Boarders are very well informed of the school's policy on expectations of behaviour. The sense of community at the school ensures that boarders who are feeling unhappy or vulnerable do not go unnoticed.

Boarders are protected from harm and abuse at the school. The school has a child protection and safeguarding policy that all staff are informed of. The Principal is the designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection in the school. She has undertaken recent training and is up to date with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures that are also reflected in the school's own policy. The school maintains good working relationships with all agencies involved in child protection issues and keeps secure and well maintained records. Staff receive training at in-service training days and are well informed of procedures to take if they have concerns about a boarder's welfare or an allegation is made.

The use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate. The school's policy firmly states that no corporal punishment is used and sanctions given are generally around being gated if late

back from the local town. Boarders have clear guidance on expected behaviour and what is unacceptable behaviour. There is very clear guidance for staff to follow if a boarder is missing.

The school has an effective fire risk assessment that is due to be updated in 2010. Records show all checks and fire procedures are of a good standard. Both staff and girls are very aware of fire evacuation procedures as a result of very regular fire drills being carried out.

There are clear guidelines in place with regards to ensuring that privacy is respected. All toilets have locks and showers have doors promoting privacy. The inspectors heard of one concern around respect for privacy relating to social networks access. The school is proactive in dealing with the difficulties that result from these networks.

Recruitment checks are thorough with a safe recruitment policy and procedures in place that include telephone verification of references. There is an on going rolling programme of renewing police list 99 and criminal records bureau checks. The human resource department is fully aware of the introduction of the Independent Safeguarding Authority in October 2009 and the effect this has on recruitment checks. The school does not have any gap students. Any local taxis used have been checked to ensure all drivers have criminal records bureau checks in place.

Staffing numbers are sufficient to ensure appropriate supervision of boarders takes place. All visitors have to sign in and are supervised during their visit to the school. There are procedures in place that the boarders are well informed of if they see people on the school site that should not be there. A good and effective system is in place for boarders to use to inform staff when they leave the site, where they are going and for how long. Boarders are clear which areas are out of bounds. There are written agreements between the school and any adult not employed by the school but living in the same building as boarding accommodation; however this agreement does not include guidance on boarder contact.

Boarders live in an environment that is free from safety hazards. This includes both indoor and outdoor areas and activities. The school has clear and detailed risk assessments in place with regards to the premises and activities both on and off site. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy in place with all gas and electrical systems being subject to regular checks.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The school has a well thought through approach to providing its boarders with a range of support and opportunities that encourage them to achieve both educationally and socially. All girls are treated with equal worth and given equal opportunity. Boarders are well informed about the people they can seek help and advice from. The school staff are very aware of individual needs and vulnerabilities and offer a wide range of support to ensure the correct referrals are made.

Boarders do not experience any inappropriate discrimination. A high percentage of boarders are from Asia and they are helped to integrate into school life in a culturally sensitive manner. All school documents show a commitment to equality and avoidance of inappropriate discrimination of all forms. Culturally sensitive and appropriate support is provided for boarders for whom English is not their first language, in boarding as well as through the curriculum. All girls are very supportive of each other and understanding of individual needs and wishes in relation to race and culture.

There is a good programme of weekend activities that boarders have a voice in choosing. Current practice is that boarders are encouraged to join in the activities on offer but can remain on site if they prefer. Boarders' feedback suggests they would like more choice of activities and the opportunity to stay on site more at weekends. The school has already started to make changes to this since the start of term.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders have numerous avenues to voice their views and opinions. Weekly house meetings, access to an independent listener, tutors and staff combined with the day to day informal interactions with members of staff ensure that boarders are able to express themselves. The food committee and school council are proactive in bringing ideas forward. Currently the school does not formalise these meetings with minutes or satisfactory records.

The school offers support for boarders to ensure they maintain contact with parents, family and friends. Staff are quick to contact parents if there is a concern or problem and maintain contact during difficult times for any child including engaging interpreters if necessary. Most boarders said they use mobile phones; however, the boarding houses do have pay phones for girls to use. Boarders can also contact their families via electronic mail. The school acknowledges there has been some difficulties with the internet server and they are working hard to address this by putting in booster stations.

New boarders receive information about the school and the boarding provision prior to arrival. They receive a good introduction with help from more experienced boarders and staff.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Boarders are provided with suitable provision for protection of their personal possessions. Each girl has a lockable cupboard or drawer to keep personal possessions and valuables. Pocket money is administered through a robust system via the school accountant. Good records are kept. The laundry provision is good with no complaints from the boarders. Boarders are able to personalise their bed space areas.

Boarders live in accommodation that is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated. Present accommodation is not suitable for boarders with disabilities. The school has and continues to invest in the fabric of the boarding houses. Boston house is of a good standard and School house a satisfactory standard. There are plans in place to redecorate and upgrade the shower provision in School house. Current showering facilities do not provide a comfortable facility for washing.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. A very high percentage of boarders are from Asia and are offered equal provision. The school recognises the diversity within the community and provides overseas students with an appreciation of British culture while respecting their cultures and seeks to support the different expectations placed upon them.

The school provides very clear information to both parents and boarders about the principles and practice of boarding life at the school. Information can be found in paper format or electronically. The school's mission statement is clear in its objectives.

The organisation of the boarding house ensures full consideration is given to safeguarding the welfare of the boarders. The boarding provision is managed by the head of pastoral care who has a wealth of experience in boarding life. She is visible on a daily basis in the boarding house for both staff and girls to access. The number of staff available for supervision of boarders is sufficient. Boarders know who is on duty and who they can go to for assistance at all times. Most of the current boarding staff are new in post. They are enthusiastic and very much liked by the girls. They are supervised and have received an organised induction. Further training is encouraged and welcomed by the staff. All boarding staff have relevant job descriptions and receive regular appraisals.

Risk assessments are in place for crises that relate to the welfare of boarders. The school has a well developed system for risk assessment. The Principal is very well informed about all aspects of the school, including the boarding provision. She has an open and friendly approach with a clear commitment to the welfare of the children. Senior staff regularly monitor records and practices throughout the school; however accidents were not seen to be monitored by an appropriate person.

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 all requirements resulting from the last environmental health department inspection are addressed within timescales given (NMS 24.8)
- ensure the programme to upgrade the provision for sick boarders is undertaken to a good standard (NMS 48)
- ensure boarders have a choice of main dish at meal times, including a more varied vegetarian choice (NMS 24.3)
- ensure all staff have an up to date criminal records bureau check not only list 99 check (NMS 38.2)
- ensure the written agreement between the school and any adult not employed by the school but living in the same building as boarding accommodation includes reference and guidance on boarder contact (NMS 39.4)
- ensure formal opportunities for boarders to express their views, such as the school council, are minuted and recorded (NMS 12.2)

- continue with plans to upgrade the boarding provision in School house (NMS 40)
- ensure records of all accidents are reviewed regularly at senior staff level such as the health and safety group. (NMS 23.2)