

Haydon Bridge High School - Ridley Hall Boarding Wing

Welfare inspection report for a boarding school

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Inspector Angela Hunt

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Ridley Hall is the boarding house of Haydon High Bridge School, a maintained school. Ridley Hall is situated in a rural location, four miles from the main school site. The local authority lease Ridley Hall. It currently accommodates 45 pupils of both genders aged between 13 and 18 years, from Monday through to Thursday nights only. Boarding is available for students that live in certain post code areas and have to travel for more than one and a quarter hours to get to school.

The boarding house also provides facilities for education courses and events including conferences and weddings at times when the boarders are not staying. The Director of Ridley Hall, matron and staff members from the main school care for the boarders. The boarding provision was last inspected on 12 November 2009.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for boarders	outstanding
Quality of boarding provision and care	good
Boarders' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of boarding	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the boarding inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness is good and there are many strengths in the provision of care afforded to boarders. The quality of the boarding provision and care has made a positive impact on attendance and progress and has therefore improved the quality of boarders' lives and opportunities in life.
- There are consistently good relationships between the boarders themselves and with staff who care for them in the boarding environment. The positive boarding experience promotes boarders' personal, social, cultural and educational development.
- The highly varied programme of activities and events outside of the school day meets the needs and interests of boarders. The boarders thoroughly enjoy the activities on offer and view this as an important aspect of the boarding experience.
- Boarders feel very safe and secure. The robust safeguarding procedures and practices ensure that boarders' safety and welfare is given high priority.
- The well established links between staff who undertake boarding duties and academic staff mean that boarders are extremely well supported in achieving good educational outcomes.
- The high quality of the boarding accommodation contributes to boarders' comfort and well-being. Good facilities for study ensure an environment conducive to learning where boarders are supported by staff to reach their full potential.
- Behaviour is well managed and the school is pro-active in dealing with any instances of reported or suspected bullying. This further promotes the safety and

well-being of boarders.

- The high level of support and guidance given to boarders promotes their self esteem and enables them to be well prepared for life once they leave school.
- The boarding facility is well organised and run for the benefit of boarders. Care is focused on the needs of individuals and each boarder is respected and treated as an individual in their own right. Regular and ongoing communication between staff and parents/carers mean that they are kept well apprised of how individuals are doing. The successful joint working ensures that the best interest of the child is central to the work undertaken by staff working in the boarding environment.
- Boarders contribute their views in a variety of meaningful ways and feel that they are effective in influencing change.
- While there are minor weaknesses against parts of the national minimum standards, these do not weaken the overall good quality of care and provision and have minimal impact on outcomes for boarders.

Outcomes for boarders

The outcomes for boarders are outstanding. The boarding experience enables boarders to develop highly successful and purposeful relationships with staff. Boarders are very well supported and are appreciative of the impressive level of support and guidance they are given by a range of dedicated school staff. Boarders are extremely supportive of one another and there is a strong sense of mutual respect amongst the boarding community. Boarders behave well and make excellent progress socially and emotionally.

Boarders feel safe and relaxed and thoroughly enjoy the range and scope of activities available. The new well-resourced media centre is a welcome addition. Once operational it will inevitably extend the opportunities available to boarders. It also endorses the high emphasis the school attributes to providing a stimulating environment for boarders outside of the school day. Boarders are most complementary about the activities they engage in and spoke extremely positively about their boarding experience. The boarding experience enriches boarders understanding of the wider community and helps to prepare them for independence and the successful transition to adult life or for the next stage of their education.

Regular boarder committee meetings ensure that boarders can contribute to the day-to-day operation of the boarding house. Boarders confirm that their views are listened to and their contribution valued. The emphasis on encouraging physical activity and the health care arrangements in place promote the physical, emotional and psychological health and well-being of boarders.

Quality of boarding provision and care

The quality of the boarding provision is good. Strengths of boarding include the high level of support and guidance boarders receive from staff in the boarding house. Staff are extremely knowledgeable about boarders' individual needs and demonstrate a strong commitment to improving outcomes for young people. The evening routine which includes a designated time for boarders to study is well organised and supervised. The established use of communication books for each boarder to record homework requirements combined with the ease of access to academic staff for guidance outside of the school day mean that there are good resources and systems to support boarders' academic and personal progress.

The well-established admission criteria and induction process is tailored to the needs of new boarders. As a result boarders settle quickly into boarding and are motivated to experience new challenges. Boarders are provided with a wide range of activities which they may not otherwise be able to access during the school week as a result of the remote rural locations of their homes. The recently developed media centre which includes a radio studio, recording gallery and a television studio and which is due to open shortly is a valuable addition to the activities on offer. The added benefit boarding offers young people helps to promote their personal development and enables them to gain valuable life skills to prepare them for moving on. For example, the community input in maintaining the school's extensive grounds, experiences involving boarders listening to outside speakers, their involvement in making decisions about fund raising initiatives and then implementing these, enable boarders to gain a good understanding of the wider world and helps to broaden their learning through gaining knowledge of negotiating, planning, organising and budgeting.

The boarding accommodation is of a high standard and the level of cleanliness and upkeep throughout is exemplary. While there is evidence of some personalisation of communal areas, the multi-use of the boarding house at times when boarders are away inevitably limits the scope to develop this further.

The school has good arrangements for healthcare, including access to outside services and support where needed. While there are appropriate arrangements in place in the boarding house for the administration of medicines, there is insufficient focus on recording the amount of medicines received so as to provide a clear audit trail and not enough emphasis given to the importance of the appropriate storage of controlled drugs. Notwithstanding this, the school's arrangements of a school nursing service provided via the health authority and the school's response to the observations made during the inspection ensure boarders have appropriate access to medical provision. The good choice of nourishing meals and emphasis on sport encourage boarders to follow healthy lifestyles.

Boarders' safety

The school makes outstanding provision in safeguarding boarders. Robust procedures and policies which are consistently applied ensure that boarders are well protected. The single central record of recruitment checks undertaken is extremely comprehensive and demonstrates that thorough vetting and selection of staff takes place. The school's designated senior member of staff responsible for child protection has a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities and has received the required level of training commensurate to their remit within the school. In addition, the Director of Ridley Hall, the matron and members of the senior management team are fully trained in child protection at an appropriate level. This illustrates the vigilant approach the school places on safeguarding boarders. In addition, it results in staffs' proactive and alert response to any suspicions or allegations of possible concerns and supports boarders' welfare and safety. A designated governor who is experienced in safeguarding further complements the arrangements in place by overseeing the approach the school takes to ensure boarders' safety is at the very heart of the school.

There is an effective behaviour management policy which boarders understand. Boarders are clear about the boundaries and of the consequences to any misdemeanours and view these as proportionate and fair. While the school is moving towards an electronic based system for recording significant instances including behaviour management, this is yet to be fully embedded across the whole school. In the meantime, the boarding house predominately maintains these records manually. All forms of bullying are viewed extremely seriously and prompt action is taken to address any instances of bullying. Boarders relay that bullying is not an issue at the school.

There are well-established health and safety arrangements in place to manage risks to boarders and protect them. This includes risk assessments, regular fire drills and ongoing maintenance of the fire safety equipment. Appropriate fire safety records are kept which underpin the vigorous systems and processes in place. Boarders indicate that they feel safe and that they are confident that staff are pro-active in ensuring their safety and well-being.

Leadership and management of boarding

The leadership and management of boarding is good. The aims and objectives are well understood and boarding routines are smoothly run and conducive to boarders being well supported and cared for. The school takes steps to consider the impact of boarding on outcomes for young people through the analysis undertaken. This demonstrates that boarding is of benefit to those who choose to board both in terms of improved attendance and educational attainment. The staff team work well together and regular handover meetings promote good communication and ensure continuity of care.

There is purposeful communication with parents, carers, placing authorities and other professionals. In addition, staff working in the boarding house are easily accessible should parents or carers need to contact them. Parental surveys confirm that they are very satisfied with the boarding provision offered and more importantly with the quality of care provided. A parent link worker further complements the good work undertaken by staff in supporting families.

All required policies are in place and records kept assist to support boarders. Boarding is an important part of the school and staff who work in the boarding house demonstrate drive and commitment in improving outcomes for boarders. There is recognition of the diverse needs of boarders and clear plans as to how these will be met, so that each young person can develop and achieve their full potential.

While there has been good improvement since the last inspection, recent improvements made to the recording and storage of medicines need to be sustained. In addition, while there is good leadership and management of boarding, further work is needed to ensure that there is evidence in support of the records specified in Appendix 2 of the national minimum standards being embedded into whole school monitoring procedures.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

What should the school do to improve further?

- ensure that the steps taken to improve the recording of medicines received and the storage of controlled drugs are sustained
- review the arrangements in place to ensure that there is a clear system to monitor the records specified in Appendix 2 of the National Minimum Standards which can be clearly evidenced

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



05/10/2011

Dear Boarders

Inspection of Haydon Bridge High School - Ridley Hall Boarding Wing

As you will know, Ofsted recently inspected the boarding provision in your school. As the inspector I visited 'Ridley Hall' and spoke to many of you and the staff who look after you during boarding time. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and for taking the time to talk to me and tell me about your experience as a boarder at the school. You also filled in our survey, as did parents or carers, and this was very helpful.

I think that the boarding provision at Ridley Hall is good. The help and support you receive from staff is excellent and helps you to prepare for adult life or for the next stage of your education. You all get on well together and I particularly liked the lovely atmosphere in the boarding house.

I think that your boarding accommodation is very good and I was really impressed with the cleanliness and upkeep of the building. It was good to hear about the wide range of activities you do after school and to see your exciting new media centre. I enjoyed the popcorn and my brief visit to the film night.

It was a real pleasure meeting you and visiting 'Ridley Hall'. I wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Angela Hunt

Yours sincerely,

Angela Hunt

