

Lincoln Minster School

Inspection report for Boarding School

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Inspector	Michael McCleave
Type of inspection	Key

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Nominated person	Clive Rickart
Date of last inspection	13/11/2006

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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 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

This is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. Although the spiritual foundation of the school is based on Christian values, children of all faiths are made welcome. Boarding is located in four houses each within a short walking distance from the main school site. The school provides pupils with a range of extra curricular activities and sporting facilities. A very well equipped medical centre provides health care.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The ethos of the school encourages care and respect for differences in all areas of life. The boarding pupils indicate they are treated with understanding, respect and dignity at all times by staff. Equality and diversity is actively supported and encouraged. This is a strong feature of the school.

The school provides the boarders with a supportive caring environment where they are encouraged positively to enjoy boarding life. Good health is promoted through a well resourced medical centre and there is a strong emphasis on healthy eating. The catering facilities are very good offering a range of choices of meals each day. The approach to safeguarding is excellent and the designated person has established strong professional links with the local safeguarding service.

Boarders are very well cared for and encouraged to enjoy boarding life. The school has an open culture where the views of all pupils are valued. The boarding houses are well maintained and comfortably furnished providing boarders with a safe and supportive place to live. The accommodation is decorated and appropriately maintained. There are good levels of security, privacy, toileting and bathing in the boarding houses. The school is implementing a rolling programme of refurbishment and redecoration throughout the boarding accommodation.

The establishment of an ongoing formal staff performance programme and training for staff in boarding practice are areas for development.

The school is providing a good service with some outstanding features.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection carried out by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) the headteacher was asked to ensure that all staff appointed to care for boarders were checked and approved before being appointed. The headteacher has

taken appropriate steps to ensure that all staff are fully cleared and approved before being offered a position at the school.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health of the boarders is taken very seriously by the school, and there is a well resourced health centre managed by a very experienced qualified nurse. Excellent arrangements are in place to access local health resources such as those for children's emotional and mental health needs. There is a strong approach taken by the school in respect of substance misuse and encouragement of healthy living among the boarders. Health and citizenship education is provided in all year groups at the school through the personal, social, health, citizenship education (PSHCE) programme. All boarders can get advice and guidance from the nurse on any health related issue. The school provides an independent counsellor who will meet with individual children in private to discuss any personal matters in confidence. These arrangements promote the health and well being of the boarders.

All boarders have access to first aid and treatment for minor illnesses. Strong links have been established by the nurse with a local clinic where boarders can access a GP. Specialist counselling support can be provided if required. The medical centre provides a comfortable place for boarders to go if they feel unhappy and want a warm and caring place to stay for a short period. The accommodation at the medical centre caters for both sexes and ensures that their privacy and dignity is maintained.

The meals provided are popular amongst the boarders and they rate the quality as very high. All tastes and dietary needs are catered for and choices are available every day. There is an emphasis on healthy meals and the catering manager meets regularly with the food committee to hear what suggestions boarders have on the variety of meals. The wide range of choices means that most if not all tastes especially from different cultures can be met. There is a positive approach at the school to ensure that the boarders enjoy the food provided. The catering manager ensures that specialist meals are provided when appropriate, through Spanish, Italian, French nights and Asian cuisine. Cultural festivities are celebrated with these and other themed meals and the dining hall is decorated to reflect the particular event being celebrated. This reflects the school's positive approach to diversity.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school operates a zero tolerance policy in respect of bullying and this is made known to all boarders when they first join the school. The policy is clear, emphasising the position of the school on this subject. However, it is evident from discussions with boarders that bullying is rare, and is not a major problem at the school. Boarders know that the school supports equality and diversity and children from other nationalities represented at the school are treated with respect. There is a

positive approach among staff to ensure that all the boarders live in harmony.

The school has a clear procedure for the management of all child protection concerns. There are excellent links with the local safeguarding service. The deputy headteacher and head of boarding have both completed the appropriate safeguarding training provided by the local safeguarding authority. All boarding staff are required to complete child protection training. The school places a high importance on child protection and has established effective links with the Cathedral authority to ensure that staff who meet with choristers have been appropriately checked. This is excellent practice. When incidents have taken place, these have been responded to in a professional manner in line with established procedures. The systems in place ensure that boarders are cared for in a safe environment.

The school operates a clear policy on behaviour and sanctions that is known to staff and boarders. The school ethos is based on tolerance and respect for each other irrespective of race or cultural background. Boarders confirm that sanctions operated by the school are fair and non discriminatory. This ensures that boarders are not subject to unfair sanctions.

The emergency evacuation procedures are practised regularly in each boarding house and information is clearly recorded when these take place. The safety of boarders is a high priority and staff are experienced in the operation of the procedures. The school has established very good links with the local fire officer who provides expert advice and guidance on all fire safety matters. This clearly enhances the safety of the boarders.

Staff are only appointed after thorough statutory checks have been completed and suitable references are received. The spouses of house staff, who have access to boarders, are also checked through the Criminal Records Bureau. This ensures that boarders are looked after by staff that are safe to care for them.

Boarding houses are made secure with effective locking mechanisms to each entrance. These keep the boarders safe from intruders.

All aspects of health and safety are very well managed and risk assessments are detailed clear and thorough. There are a range of responses to emergencies and these are clear and concise ensuring that all staff are aware of how to deal with crisis situations. There is a clear understanding amongst staff of the policies and procedures to ensure the safety of boarders. Effective systems are in place to promote safety at the school.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There are a wide range of adults at the school who can be approached for support and guidance. It is clearly evident that boarders are confident in being able to raise any concerns with individual staff. Additionally, the school has the service of an

independent listener from the local community. The boarders are clearly at ease as to whom they approach for support. The caring ethos of the school is strongly reflected in the way boarders interact with each other. For new boarders, there is the mentoring system, which works extremely well. This involves linking them with older established boarders, to advise, support and guide them during their early days of boarding life. This is an excellent example of the level of support provided to those who are new to boarding.

Boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination. As one boarder commented, 'it's not about race, but how you behave towards others that counts'. There are different cultures and religions represented at the school and firm friendships have been established. Loyalty to each other and the caring philosophy of the school, preclude the likelihood of racism or discrimination taking place. This ensures that boarders live in friendship with each other. It is also a clear demonstration of the positive culture at the school in promoting equality and diversity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The boarders are able to make a positive contribution to boarding life through the boarder's council which meets every term. Through this forum, the headteacher and head of boarding are kept informed about a range of issues related to boarding life at the school. Boarders can express their views at weekly house meetings where issues specifically related to houses are discussed. The food committee ensures that the catering manager is kept informed about the quality of food provided. Boarders feel that they can make changes and have an influence on decisions which affect their life at the school.

Boarders are encouraged to maintain contact with their families. There is free use of the Resource Centre computers to enable boarders to email home and most boarders have access to a mobile telephone. An induction to boarding life takes place to welcome new boarders. It is also an opportunity for new boarders to meet their house staff and peers. This event is also intended to introduce new boarders to their allocated mentor, who will be responsible for ensuring that they are guided and supported during their early days of boarding life. This is good practice and encourages friendships to develop and helps to improve the self confidence of boarders, especially those from abroad.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarding accommodation provides the boarders with a clean and well maintained boarding house to live in during their time at the school. Boarders share sleeping accommodation and this is generally two to a good size room. They have sufficient personal space available to them. Every boarder has a lockable cupboard to keep

personal items safe. Showers and toilet facilities are clean and are located near to the bed rooms. Some of these facilities are showing signs of wear and tear. There is however, an ongoing refurbishment programme to upgrade these facilities. The lack of internet facilities in the boarding houses is an area that boarders would like to see improved. The school are aware of this limitation and are currently actively seeking advice from a specialist in this field.

The boarding houses each have a common room where boarders congregate on evenings and weekends to relax and socialise. These are well maintained and suitably furnished and decorated. The seating in the various common rooms generally consists of comfortable settees and differing styles of single chairs.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school positively promotes care and respect among all of the pupils. Although this is a school based on Christian traditions, boarders from all religious and cultural backgrounds are welcomed. Those boarders from a non Christian background are supported to follow their own religion. Through the personal, social, health and citizenship education teaching programme, boarders are introduced to a range of topics that supports equality and diversity. The school is currently supporting projects in less developed countries where the active involvement of boarders and other pupils are having a positive impact on the lives of children in those countries. The school is justifiably proud of the positive approach taken to embrace equality and diversity.

The school's mission statement is clearly indicated in a number of key documents that are available to staff and parents. The parent's handbook and information booklets for each house clearly set out the principles of boarding. The student handbook contains all the information boarders require to ensure that they are clear about boarding life.

The management of boarding is sound. Each house has a small team of dedicated staff, who are always available to support and assist boarders should they have a problem or any concerns. It is evident that the boarding team are very committed to their work ensuring the care and welfare of the boarders is a high priority. Although annual appraisal for boarding staff is in place, there is no formal mechanism for assessing individual staff performance throughout the year leading up to the annual appraisal. Additionally, not all staff have participated in ongoing training to enhance their professional skills in boarding practice.

The boarders are happy with life in their respective houses and they have developed strong friendships among their peers. There are no major or inappropriate discrepancies in the principles or practice of boarding between the different boarding houses. The common theme throughout is one of team work among the staff to ensure that boarders are well cared for and supported.

All boarding house records are appropriately maintained. These include sanctions, accidents and complaints. Where there are concerns about individual boarders and their welfare, more detailed confidential records are maintained. It is evident that through the strong leadership of the headteacher and support from the head of boarding, staff are provided with appropriate management support. They have a clear understanding of their duties. This ensures the efficient operation of the boarding provision and promotes safeguarding of the boarders.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure there is an appropriate process for the regular review of the performance of each member of staff with boarding duties by a more senior or experienced member of staff through individual supervision meetings (NMS 34.5)
- ensure opportunities are provided for training and updating in boarding practice for all boarding staff. (NMS 34.7)