

Stanbridge Earls School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Roy Bega
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Date of last inspection	19 November 2007

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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

Stanbridge Earls is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 10 to 19 years. The school specialises in providing education for young people with a range of special educational needs, most notably those with a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia. The school has specialist and experienced teaching staff and high teacher to pupil ratios.

The school is located in 50 acres of landscaped grounds close to the small town of Romsey. The majority of pupils are boarders and the boarding provision is organised by year group into nine residential units of varying size.

Summary

This is the school's announced annual social care inspection. It took place over a period of two days and all key standards are assessed.

Recommendations from the previous inspection on 19 November 2007 are assessed as being met. There are no recommendations resulting from this inspection.

Effective systems are in place for obtaining health related information prior to pupils commencing attendance. Detailed and well maintained records promote individual pupil's health needs and how they are to be met. The school also works closely with local specialist medical agencies in securing the best possible care for its pupils.

Excellent systems are in place to promote the safeguarding of pupils. The deputy head (pastoral) is the school's child protection liaison officer and has undertaken training relevant to the role. Management and staff create an atmosphere and ethos where bullying is known to be unacceptable.

Pupils benefit from having dedicated boarding staff. A more 'family' orientated ambience is evident. Pupils confirm they feel able to 'switch off' from school and be more relaxed. The staffing structure ensures a co-ordinated approach to pupils' personal, social, and educational development.

There are excellent opportunities for pupils to express their views about how the school operates and any matters affecting them. Excellent facilities are available for pupils to contact parents, family and friends in private. The school maintains excellent communication with pupils' parents who are consulted and appropriately kept informed about matters affecting their children.

The school is currently in the process of a refurbishment and building programme which is improving boarding facilities.

The school provides excellent written information for pupils and their parents. This includes both pupil and parent handbooks, a well produced and colourful school brochure and handy 'new pupils' guides. The staff group possess a wealth of expertise and experience. Pupils benefit from an extremely effective staff team who provide continuity of care.

The promotion of equality and diversity throughout the school is outstanding. Management and staff create an atmosphere and ethos where meeting individual needs is paramount.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The recommendation from the previous inspection for the school to review in consultation with boarding pupils its provision for enabling them to express their views is met.

The recommendation from the previous inspection for the school to make provision for the effective monitoring of recruitment procedures is met.

The recommendation from the previous inspection for the school to have in place a suitable staff induction programme is met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils benefit from the school's 'Mission Statement For Health Care'. It emphasises the health of pupils is paramount and staff have a responsibility to provide good role models in relation to healthy living.

Stanbridge Earls school provides specialist education for pupils from across the globe. Effective systems are in place for obtaining health related information prior to pupils commencing attendance. Detailed and well maintained records promote individual pupil's health needs and how they are to be met. The school also works closely with local specialist medical agencies in securing the best possible care for its pupils. Excellent communication systems across the campus ensure confidential information is shared on a need to know basis. The medical record system is to be enhanced by the introduction of suitable soft ware on the school's intranet system.

Pupils benefit from excellent arrangements for health promotion. This includes citizenship programmes which are fully supported by tutors and the school's nurses and where applicable external agencies. Information is also available direct from the school nurses and displayed around the school. Pupils confirm the citizenship programmes cover a wide range of health related topics which helps them to understand things.

Healthy eating is integral to the school's health promotion. Good links between nursing staff and the catering manager ensure specialist dietary requirements are met both for health and cultural needs.

Pupils benefit from 24 hour cover by the school nurses and regular health clinics. The school medical officer visits weekly. There is a good relationship with the local surgery where pupils have independent access to a male or female doctor. The school also provides on site confidential counselling service for pupils to which they can self refer. Pupils spoken with confirm having good access to the nurses, counsellor and doctor. They also confirm when unwell all staff are kind and helpful.

Pupils benefit from the school's clear policies and procedures in relation to medication and its administration. Medication is securely stored and records well maintained. Senior pupils are able to administer their own medication in line with stringent procedures and risk assessments.

The majority of staff are first aid trained. First aid boxes are located throughout the school.

Records of significant illnesses, accidents, and injuries to pupils are well maintained and effectively monitored.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils benefit by the school's policy and procedures regarding privacy and confidentiality. Pupils spoken with confirm staff suitably respect their privacy. They are able to contact parents family and friends by telephone in private. Pupils also confirm they have personal email accounts to contact home. Pupils from outside Britain confirm they find the personal email account very useful.

There is an open ethos within the school for pupils to complain. There are a number of forums for pupils to express their views and concerns. Pupils confirm they are able to approach any member of staff with a problem or concern. A complaints log is maintained and monitored by the school's deputy head. It shows any complaint received from a pupil is taken seriously and dealt with promptly.

Excellent systems are in place to promote the safeguarding of pupils. The deputy head (pastoral) is the school's child protection liaison officer and has undertaken training relevant to the role. The head master and a female member of staff are also appropriately trained for the role and provide cover when necessary. The school's child protection liaison officer provides an annual comprehensive report to the governing body linked directly to the National Minimum Standards. A nominated school governor maintains an oversight of safeguarding matters within the school and feeds back regularly to the governing body. The school has good working relationships with the police and the local children's services department. Staff receive appropriate training from a recognised organisation. Discussions show they are well conversant with the school's policy and procedures. Discussions confirm all newly appointed staff, including ancillary and 'gap year' students cover safeguarding of children and young people as part of their induction. Pupils confirm they feel safe and know what to do if they have any concerns.

Management and staff create an atmosphere and ethos where bullying is known to be unacceptable. There is an ongoing high profile initiative within the school designed to address any problems. The policy on countering bullying is known to all and effective in practice. Pupils confirm there are very low levels of bullying within the school. They also confirm staff act promptly and provide support subsequent to any incident that occurs. It is apparent pupils are very respectful and supportive towards pupils from other cultures and those who have differing needs.

There are clear procedures for staff to follow in the event of a pupil being reported missing. Discussions and records show there have not been any incidents for several years.

The school specialises in providing a holistic approach for pupils who have specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and mild asperger's syndrome. It also places

a strong emphasis on the development of mutual trust and courtesy and respect for others. The positive relationships between pupils, between staff and pupils, and the general standard of pupil behaviour show the school's approach to be succeeding. There is a clear 'Code of Conduct'. It details the rules applicable to pupils, a rewards and sanctions policy and provision for exclusion. Pupils consider the rules to be fair and just. Staff also apply them fairly and do not use inappropriate sanctions.

The school has excellent provision for the management of risk across the campus and provides a safe environment for its pupils. Up to date risk assessments are in place for activities undertaken by pupils both on and off site. Detailed evidence is in place regarding procedures that are followed when pupils are taken overseas on activity holidays. A health and safety committee meets every half term to discuss any issues and concerns.

Fire safety checks and tests are up to date. Up to date fire risk assessments are in place for all boarding houses. Records show fire drills are held as required and at different times of day and night. Pupils confirm being made aware of the fire evacuation procedures in boarding houses.

Records show the school's electrical and gas installations are inspected and serviced at the required intervals. The testing for portable electrical appliances is carried out on an annual basis.

The school's development plan to improve security measures is in the process of being implemented. A traffic barrier to the entrance of the main campus is in place. The need to ensure safe traffic movement from the main road has unfortunately necessitated the girls dormitory to be outside the traffic barrier. Finger print identity security locks are installed onto exterior dormitory doors. Additional exterior lighting across the campus is to be provided. Close circuit television is to be installed covering entrances of all dormitories and possibly also to the rear of 'Goulds', the girls boarding house.

An effective recruitment process is followed in respect of all staff. Files seen and discussions show that before being offered a position an application form is completed, a minimum of two references obtained, a full interview conducted and an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau check completed. Staff benefit from an excellent induction process.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils benefit from having dedicated boarding staff. A more 'family' orientated ambience is evident. Pupils confirm they feel able to 'switch off' from school and be more relaxed. This is also reflected in staff comments.

The staffing structure ensures a co-ordinated approach to pupils' personal, social, and educational development. This is enhanced by excellent formal and informal communication across the campus.

Pastoral and educational staff have their own and joint management/developmental meetings.

All pupils have evening prep where they are supervised and supported by specialist subject teachers. This takes place within the education setting. Protected computer access in all boarding

houses including pupils' own laptops provides additional access to the internet and educational resources.

The school provides excellent levels of individual support for pupils. This is provided by dedicated specialist teachers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and pastoral staff.

There is also very good support for those pupils who have English as a second language. Staff at the school are very approachable, and pupils are able to discuss personal or welfare problems with a number of people. These include the school's counsellor, their personal tutors, housemasters and housemistresses, house parents, and appointed independent persons. The school also provides good individual support for those pupils with specific health needs and have good access to external professionals when necessary.

Several upper school pupils spoken with confirm their lives have been turned around since attending the school. They provided the inspector with amazing accounts of their experiences. All pupils spoken with confirm they can go to any member of staff to discuss anything.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are excellent opportunities for pupils to express their views about how the school operates and any matters affecting them.

There is an elected school council made up of two elected representatives from each year group of upper school. Clear guidelines are in place for pupils that explain how and who to put forward their requests. The representatives meet weekly with the head of citizenship. Minutes are taken and presented to the senior management team. Decisions are then passed back to the school council. A most recent request is the provision of external tables and chairs to improve pupils socialising during 'free time'.

It has been assessed lower school pupils found this forum too daunting. Therefore they discuss issues weekly during tutor group time. One of their achievements is the provision of fresh fruit in the dormitories.

Staff have excellent awareness of pupils who find it difficult to express their view in a group situation. They are therefore actively encouraged to speak with a member of staff of their choice. A confidential suggestion box is also available for pupils to place their thoughts/concerns.

A pupils 'Voice' magazine run by pupils (supported by staff) for pupils is published termly. Pupils are encouraged to submit articles including views about the school.

Pupils are consulted and contribute to their annual reviews. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with staff. They confirm there is always someone available for them to talk to. Regular house meetings are held within all boarding houses.

The school makes suitable arrangements for those pupils of differing faiths to attend services and observe religious festivals. Pupils confirm opportunities are made as part of citizenship to discuss their differing cultures and religious observances.

Excellent facilities are available for pupils to contact parents, family and friends in private.

The school maintains excellent communication with pupils' parents who are consulted and appropriately kept informed about matters affecting their children.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

This outcome group does not cover key standards therefore is not routinely assessed. On this occasion it is pertinent however to make reference to the recent and planned refurbishments and new building.

New en suite bathroom, laundry and kitchen facilities are provided in several boarding houses. New staff accommodation is provided in two boarding houses.

The sports hall, swimming pool and several education facilities are completely refurbished.

In summer 2009 it is planned for the wooden structures currently providing accommodation for the boys upper school to be replaced by a modern brick purpose built dormitory.

Long term plans include further refurbishment to the girls' accommodation.

The completion of the school's building and refurbishment programme will improve boarding facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Pupils benefit from having dedicated boarding staff. A more 'family' orientated ambience is evident. Pupils confirm they feel able to 'switch off' from school and be more relaxed. This is also reflected in staff comments.

The school provides excellent written information for pupils and their parents. This includes both pupil and parent handbooks, a well produced and colourful school brochure and handy 'new pupils' guides. Parents are also provided with copies of relevant policy and procedures documents. Parents confirm information provided gives a very clear picture of the school, the principles under which it operates, its aims for pupils, and a suitable overview of life as a boarder.

The school has an informative website. A pupil is actively involved in the design of the website as part of their information and technology course. The site has won an award from the local authority for its content and clarity. It is planned to develop the website. Under appropriate guidelines one idea is to introduce audio recordings of pupils regarding their experience of the school.

Pupils benefit from extremely positive and mutually respectful relationships with staff at the school. There is an integrated approach to working with pupils across the care and education settings. This is supported by excellent formal and informal communication between staff.

The staff group possess a wealth of expertise and experience. Pupils benefit from an extremely effective staff team who provide continuity of care.

Staff benefit from a structured induction programme and active support from the senior management team.

Pupils benefit from there always being staff available within boarding houses. Pupils confirm they feel staff are very approachable and supportive of them.

Some upper school pupils assume responsibilities appropriate to their position as prefects and act as positive role models for younger pupils.

The staffing structure across the school provides very effective pastoral care, safeguarding and promotion of pupil welfare.

The school's deputy head (pastoral), provides excellent support for staff and plays an extremely important and effective role in the overall monitoring of the welfare provision for boarding pupils. The monitoring process also includes the effective involvement of the school's governing body. Comprehensive policies and procedures underpin all aspects of the school's operation.

Pupils are safeguarded by the school's rigorous recruitment procedures.

The promotion of equality and diversity throughout the school is outstanding. Management and staff create an atmosphere and ethos where meeting individual needs is paramount. The school specialises in providing a holistic approach for pupils who have specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and mild asperger's Syndrome. It also places a strong emphasis on the development of mutual trust and courtesy and respect for others. Pupils attend the school from across the globe. The school makes suitable arrangements

for those pupils of differing faiths to attend services and observe religious festivals.

Inclement weather during this visit required the school to act promptly in ensuring appropriate staff coverage. This was managed efficiently with minimal effect upon pupils. Management and staff are to be congratulated with regards to the professional and caring manor in which this emergency was approached. Pupils are also to be congratulated in being a credit to themselves and school during this time.

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):