

Papplewick School

Inspection report for Boarding School

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Inspector	Chris Passmore
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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

Papplewick School is an independent preparatory school for boys, registered as a charitable trust. Pupils from ages six to thirteen can attend with boarding optional in the lower years and compulsory from the summer term of year six. There were 115 boarders at the time of this inspection.

The school is set in spacious grounds on the edge of Ascot, Berkshire. There are good facilities for sporting activities, music and art. The boarding accommodation is divided into several dormitories housed in the upstairs of the main school building.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an announced inspection conducted over three days by two inspectors, including a boarding school additional inspector.

Since the last inspection several new key appointments have been made, policy and practice have been improved and the organisation of boarding has been totally revised.

The boarding areas provide personalised, sleeping accommodation; furnishings are promptly maintained by a professional in-house maintenance team. The grounds and sports fields are also kept to a very high standard.

There are excellent sporting and leisure activities available on site, and boarders can also access the facilities of external clubs and sports organisations.

Staff work together well to ensure that the boys' individual needs are met. Any minor issues are addressed without delay, and staff work very hard to ensure that children enjoy their boarding life to the full.

There is strong leadership and management within the school and several key personnel have been in post for many years. Staff understand their various areas of responsibility and are committed to the school.

The whole staff group and the boys are a true community. Many times through the inspection staff and boys referred to the school and boarding as a family. The boys are respectful but confident in the presence of adults and can engage at a level of maturity above their age. They respect and show consideration for each other but are natural and well rounded individuals.

Everyone takes a pride in the school, staff work hard and long to achieve and maintain the highest standards for the pupils. These factors result in outstanding outcomes for the boys.

No recommendations have been made on this occasion. Development and maintenance plans were discussed with the Headmaster and bursar and work is already scheduled to commence during the Easter and summer holidays.

Improvements since the last inspection

Seven recommendations were made at the last inspection relating to policy, procedure, structural and practice issues. The school has responded by policies being amended and practice reflecting these new principles. This has led to improved safety for pupils in areas of medical administrations and recruitment of staff. Structural changes have been made to improve pupil privacy and safety. All areas identified for improvement have been addressed and the school continues to work to raise standards through continual monitoring and reflective practice.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' health is very well promoted through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum taught in the school. It is age appropriate and differentiated for students in their final year. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged and promoted through daily sessions of organised sports or those break time games of cricket or 'dodge ball' organised by the boys themselves. Every boy is encouraged to take some physical exercise on a daily basis and the school's facilities and grounds provide ample opportunity for this.

Appropriate first aid and minor illness treatment are available to boarders. There is a registered nurse on duty at regular times six out of seven days each week. Outside of these times she is contactable by phone and can respond to need in a very short time as she is locally based. First aid treatment is available at all times from qualified staff across the school and in each of the boarding houses. First aid equipment is sited around the site and in each of the school mini-buses. Responsibility for the upkeep of these boxes rests with the school nurse.

There are good arrangements in place for boarders to have allied health care from local practitioners and each boarder can be registered with the local health centre. A doctor from the local health centre visits the school twice each week or appointments can be made at the health centre as required. The nurse refers any concerns about boys' physical, emotional or psychological health care on to the doctor who is responsible for referral to the appropriate specialist health professional. The nurse also oversees issues of diet, lifestyle and allergies in relation to individual boarders.

The organisation and management of regular and occasional medication is very good. Proprietary storage and administration systems are in place to keep

medications safe and reduce the opportunity for administration errors. Policies and procedures are in place to cover each aspect of boarders' health care management and there is a clear record of any illness, accident or incidental injury.

Boarders who are unwell can remain in their dorms if appropriate to do so or are cared for in sick bay. This facility has three beds and a full en-suite facility. Alternatively and according to age and condition boys return to their family or guardians

Breakfast and lunches are favourite meal times together with the treat nights and hot chocolate times in the evenings. The catering staff are approachable, adaptable and willing to experiment with recipes from different nationalities. They provide meals to meet a diversity of faith, cultural, dietary and health needs. There is an emphasis on healthy eating and most of the ingredients used are fresh produce with very limited frozen foods purchased. Fresh fruit, cheese and biscuits and a full salad bar selection are provided at each main meal.

During morning and afternoon school breaks there are trolleys available with refreshments and snacks. Water and milk are freely available throughout the day and in the evenings from the house parents.

Bowls of fresh fruit are also provided in the dorm corridors and boys were seen to regularly take from these. Boys have plenty of ways in which to express their feelings about the meals provided and the key staff involved in catering and health meet regularly to discuss menu planning, boys comments, requests and celebrations or events.

Catering staff approach their task with great sensitivity and understanding. They are considerate of the age of the boys and the distance many of them are from their home, parents and familiar culture. Staff appreciate the difficulties of experiencing a different country and culture and use the focus of food to create some home from home comfort and reassurance. Overseas boarders are especially encouraged to give their views about the meals provided and to provide recipes from home that catering staff will try out.

As with any community there are differences of opinion and personal preferences vary, so universal agreement about food is not claimed. However, discussions with the boys, observations of them at mealtimes and the experience of the inspection all contribute to the view that Papplewick endeavours to provide a popular range of healthy food that is well prepared and presented.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Through their surveys and discussion groups boarders were clear that while there are occasional incidents of bullying these are rare and the school responds quickly and clearly to them. The ethos of the school is based on no unkind acts and every

boy felt the school promotes this principle and they respect it.

The school has taken extremely good measures to promote cyber safety and educate boys and parents in the dangers of the internet and how to use it safely and productively. Reasonable monitoring of student use of the school's computer facilities exists and boys are aware of these. Mobile phone use is limited to periods before bedtime and where, exceptionally, personal laptops are allowed, there are robust measures in place to monitor content. Incidents of inappropriate cyber use have been reported and the school's disciplinary responses have been proportional to the individual incidents.

The Headmaster is the designated person for child protection in the school. The school's child protection policy is comprehensive and robust and available on the school's website as well as in hard copy. This policy reflects local safeguarding practice, links into the local authority safeguarding procedures and is effective in practice. All staff have received a safeguarding pupils briefing as part of their induction and as part of the school's ongoing training commitment. This was borne out during discussions with groups or individual staff from across the school through the inspection.

The school has clear and well understood disciplinary procedures. Disciplinary incidents are dealt with at the appropriate level. The school has simple but effective rules based on three 'no go' values. A few parents felt the school's discipline was not always strong enough but the record of punishments showed that a clear tariff of escalating punishments have been meted out over time. The boys are clear about the range of punishments they expect for general misdemeanours and are aware that more serious punishments follow more serious breaches of their no go principles.

Boarders are very well protected from the risk of fire. As part of their induction, all boarders and boarding staff are trained in fire evacuation. In addition, each boarding area has clear instructions for boarders on how to respond to the fire alarms. There are planned drills at the start of each term with more testing evacuations taking place when false alarms occur or by the Headmaster setting the alarms without boarders or staff having prior warning. The latter are designed to test responses at various times of the boarding day and night.

Boarders' personal privacy is well respected by staff with appropriate supervision and availability in boarding houses. Not all the boys felt that the principle of dormitory accommodation was ideal but it is something they learn to manage. Many of their comments however supported the view that they benefited from and enjoyed shared sleeping accommodation. They have plenty of scope and accommodation available to them on the ground floor and in the school grounds for leisure purposes and activities. The boys stated they knew which rooms they could use if they wanted some more personal space and time. They felt that staff supervision of them was reasonable, non-intrusive and that staff respected their rights to personal space.

There is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff. A sample of staff files across the

school's recruitment records showed the school working in line with guidelines for safer recruitment in schools and met the national minimum standards. The school also maintains the required single central record of recruitment and vetting checks and this includes other key information over and above that required.

Boarders are protected from unsupervised contact with adults who have not been subject to vetting checks. Levels of security across the school and the living accommodation are good and include key pads and CCTV cameras. Predominantly pupil safety is enhanced through the number of staff who live on site and are regularly in and around the campus.

There is a very effective system of risk assessment overseen or advised on by an external consultant and supported by records. The in-house maintenance team manage much of the day to day repair and maintenance but installation servicing and professional works are contracted out. The school has a system of vetting all regular contractors or contractors are continuously escorted through their visit.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff who are involved in pastoral support link very well with each other so that there is excellent communication regarding pupils' welfare.

Pupils can also readily contact the independent listener. They also have access to help lines through numbers displayed around the campus. Any external sources of professional support required may be arranged through the nurse who works closely with the school doctor to ensure that children's needs are being met in the best way possible. The Chaplain is also closely involved, and regularly carries out a duty in boarding.

The school achieves exceptional outcomes for people from minority ethnic backgrounds and no one reported any discrimination. All are very well supported when they first arrive in school. Overseas students often visit friends or guardians living in Britain during exeat weekends, and the school encourages sharing of cultural knowledge through themed events .

The school teaches acceptance and respect for all beliefs, and although all boarders go to Chapel students from alternative faiths do not have to take part in the services. Weekday chapel focus is broadly on moral values rather than specifically Christian ethos and other individual faith observations or celebrations, such as Ramadan, Eid and Diwali are supported by the school

Although pupils are kept very busy there are no overly onerous demands made upon them, and they all enjoy the activities and opportunities open to them. The school provides a hugely diverse range of activity opportunities for the boys. These include many sports options as well as craft or skills based activities. The recent introduction of a Herpetology club is immensely popular. Boarders get to meet girls at social

occasions arranged between schools and have many arranged off site visits through matches or school arranged visits overseas.

Recreational areas around the school are safe and break times are appropriately supervised by experienced staff. These break times usually involve cricket games in the square, organised spontaneously by the boys and involving pupils across the age range and nationality mixes. Comments from the boys included, 'I enjoy it (boarding) and sometimes do not want to go home' and 'It is a good place to get to know your friends better.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have many ways to communicate their views and make suggestions. These include on line surveys, regular boarding house meetings, food committee and Boys fund committee. There is an open comments book in the dining room which boys are encouraged to use but mainly the boys relate that they can talk to any of the house staff or their tutors at any time. Boarding house meeting minutes show that a number of suggestions had been implemented, for example recipes from other nationalities, taster table and choice of charity support for fund raising.

All pupils interviewed said that they are able to keep in touch with their families and friends. Each boarding area has a phone but most boys have their own mobiles, although there are reasonable boundaries around their use. Boarders can also email their parents and the school is considering acquiring additional internet connections in order to facilitate more technical contact possibilities.

The school has a sound admissions process which, through effective communication with parents and any previous school, helps to ensure that this school is right for the child and enables child and parents to be fully involved in the introduction process. Boys who had recently started boarding both said that they were welcomed into school and had settled in very well. There is a scheme of mentoring in place for new boys and the school consults overseas boarders regarding their experience of admission in order to better serve their needs.

Boarders have access to the school library, television and the internet to keep them in touch with the outside world. The boys are very socially aware and have links to schemes designed to assist education and welfare in other countries. Boys are also involved in eco projects involving the importance of recycling and looking after the environment.

There are extremely trusting and productive relationships between staff and pupils in the school. Pupils are respectful, confident and articulate. Some approached the inspectors to volunteer information about their experiences at the school, ask questions or share an explanation of a task they were on. Those who made specific contributions to the inspection process were relaxed and comfortable in their

relationship to adults and showed insight and a pride in the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

All boarders have a personal locker in which belongings and equipment can be stored. No money is kept by boarders but they can draw agreed spending money from the bursar and this is billed each term. Boarders have lockers in which belongings and equipment can be stored. These are sited at key positions around the school. There are no lockable facilities in dormitories. Mobile phones are collected in by staff overnight, charged if necessary and then given out on the following day and boys are discouraged from bringing other valuable items into school. Boys respect each others possessions and are aware that no theft is one of their 'no go' values. They reported however that occasionally personal items have gone missing from the trays in their bedside cabinets.

Boarding accommodation comprises individual year group common rooms on the ground floor of the school together with sleeping accommodation on the first floor of the main school building. All meals are taken in the communal dining room and are sociable occasions where boys and staff sit around a table to eat together.

Dormitory accommodation varies in terms of size, furnishings and décor. There is a mix of small rooms and larger dormitory space with bunks or single beds used according to age and numbers. Furnishings are functional but generally in good order. There have been problems with mattresses being too hard but the school is aware of this and boys have found work around arrangements. Decoration varies from commissioned murals to individualised wall displays made up from posters, photos of home and family, to personal displays of art work and even a set of rifle shooting targets demonstrating a rising score. Personalised space and belongings are evident throughout the accommodation.

Showers, toilets and washing facilities are mostly in communal blocks but have appropriate individual separations where required and are plentiful. The boys made no adverse comments about these arrangements and from observations of their evening preparations they were seen to be using the facilities quite naturally and with due respect for each other. Facilities are good quality and well maintained; they are scrupulously clean and hygienically maintained throughout.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school's statement of boarding principles and practice comprises the school prospectus, its website, brochure for parents and an information pack including specific articles and magazines. All are available to parents and pupils.

The school and boarding is managed on a day-to-day basis by the Headmaster. Specific areas of responsibility are delegated out and coordinated through a strong leadership team. The Headmaster meets regularly with the various responsible individuals or groups and is fully involved in and aware of every aspect of school life. He is in turn accountable to the board of governors and regularly reports to the board on the progress of the school including boarding. There was a discussion with the chair of governors during the inspection and another member of the board was present for the feedback on the inspection findings.

Boarding is extremely well managed. The organisation of boarding has been fully reviewed and restructured since the last inspection. Boarding staff now have house parent responsibilities for specific year groups. There are also specified additional staff members who assist the house parents in these year groups on a regular basis. The net result is that each year group receives care from a dedicated group of staff who get to know them well as individuals and are more able to meet their needs. Boarding staff still retain an overall responsibility to all boarders and day pupils but this shift in emphasis works well. Boarders know who will be on duty, they develop strong relationships with house parents and staff and have confidence in sharing issues. Boarding staff similarly appreciate the opportunity to get to know a specific group of boys and all were very positive about the change.

All boarding, maintenance, catering and cleaning staff work very hard to achieve excellence through effective team work and long hours. The overall rating of outstanding reflects on all staff and the pupils.

The Headmaster keeps records of serious complaints, incidents and punishments and monitors those dealt with by boarding staff through regular meetings. The school has a good system of risk assessment, Boarding provision is well staffed by house tutors, house parents, assistant house parents and matrons. Each year group landing has a staff flat with individuals or family members permanently in residence. There are other members of school staff who also live on site therefore both the immediate and wider community of boarders are well catered for in terms of adults able to respond in a crisis.

All staff have an excellent induction. There is a training budget available and boarding staff have the opportunity to request specific training though much of the whole school training is appropriate to boarding. There is an excellent boarding staff handbook and the staff most involved in boarding duties are mutually supportive and know they have access to the Headmaster for advice and guidance. There is a clear system of professional development and appraisal that takes into account boarding experience and practice.

Any pupils who go off site on school trips are very well supported. Staff plan trips thoroughly, and will visit the proposed destination to conduct a full risk assessment.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school ensures that all pupils are valued, irrespective of background or ability. Inclusion, consideration and discretion are threads throughout the school's operation.

