

St Bees School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Anne Bannister
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Date of last inspection	15 November 2005

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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

St Bees School was founded in 1583 and is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged from 11 to 18. It occupies a central site in St Bees, a large village on the west coast of Cumbria. The school is organised into five separate boarding houses which are Bega (girls aged 11-15 years); Abbots Court (boys aged 11-15 years); Lonsdale (girls aged 16-18 years); School House (boys aged 16-18 years); Grindal House (boys aged 16-18 years). The Headmaster has been in post since September 2000. The overall responsibility for the running of the school lies with the Board of Governors.

Summary

The purpose of this key announced inspection was to fully assess all 21 key standards of the Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards. The section Economic Wellbeing was also assessed although there are no key standards for this outcome. The care of young people who board at St Bees School is very good. Where there are areas of weakness they generally relate to paperwork rather than staff practice. The outcomes for young people at the school have been judged to be good, with a whole school approach being implemented to developing young people's social and education abilities to their full potential.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last key inspection occurred in February 2004 and resulted in 23 recommendations being made to the school. A monitoring visit took place in November 2005 to assess how the school was progressing the recommendations made. It was determined at this visit that all but five of the recommendations had been actioned by the school. Of these five three remain outstanding and will continue to be recommended following this key inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff have a good awareness of the school's health education policies and implement these in their daily contact with boarders. Information is available in age appropriate formats and staff are able to discuss personal, health and social matters with boarders in their care. The school maintains adequate boarders' health records which contain information from parents and any appointments which need to be attended so that staff are fully aware of boarders' health or welfare needs. Boarders can obtain good quality medical treatment and first aid. Matron is a registered nurse who is available for the treatment of minor illnesses and there are sufficient qualified first aiders within the staff team. Boarders also have access to either a male or female general practitioner, who hold on site surgeries three times per week. The school has a medication policy, procedure and practice guidance which specifically addresses the use of non prescribed medication. Appropriate permissions to administer first aid, medication and to seek medical attention are obtained. House staff have not received training in the safe administration of medication and as a result are not always adhering to Royal Pharmaceutical guidelines. Although matron is aware of the medicines held in the medical centre and on houses she does not keep a running total of the medication brought into and disposed of from the school site. the school undertakes a written risk assessment before boarders are given responsibility for

their own medication and on four of the five boarding houses safe storage for pupils self medicating is provided. Although records are maintained of all medicines given to pupils there is no central record noting all medicines a young person had received. Boarders who are ill are supervised by matron during the school day, either in the medical centre or, for senior pupils, by a responsible adult on house who is supported by matron. If medication is administered to sick boarders during the day by the Matron this information is telephoned to the housemaster/mistress at the end of Matron's duty, in order that care may be continued. This practice is not always reciprocated by house staff who may have administered medicines during the night. Catering staff responsible for the provision and preparation of meals have a good understanding of what makes a good balanced diet, having an awareness of nutritional practice which is incorporated into menu planning. Menu planning is good and includes regular consultation with boarders. It includes culturally appropriate food and introduces new dishes to pupils. There is a good choice of foods at each meal and boarders are supplied with a balanced, nutritious diet. Overall, although there are some administrative deficits in practice which result in the recommendations being made, this outcome group is judged as good. This is because where areas for improvement emerge the school had begun to take action to resolve them before the end of the inspection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Boarders confirm that there is a low level of bullying within the school and that staff act immediately and effectively to any information that bullying is taking place. Boarders and staff are very clear on what the school's policy on bullying is. Peer intervention to support both the perpetrator and the victim routinely takes place when bullying occurs. The information in the pupil handbook needs to be reviewed to ensure that it reflects clearly the school's good practice and does not place undue burden on the person experiencing bullying to make the initial approach to the perpetrator. The designated person for child safeguarding has shown an outstanding commitment to their role, ensuring that every young person and staff member employed by the school is aware of their responsibility to protect young people. A system of induction of all new pupils and staff has been put in place which includes initial in house training outlining responsibilities to keep all young people safe. Boarders confirm that staff give a high priority to keeping them safe. The school has a clear procedure for responding to child protection concerns and is developing links with the local safeguarding team. The policies on behaviour management, punishments and circumstances when restraint may occur are very clear but relate to the school day. There is no specific written guidance for house staff, resulting in no consistent recording of punishments across the houses. The management of behaviour is based on active encouragement of acceptable behaviours. Boarders confirm that standards of acceptable behaviour are clearly understood and have their support. The use of sanctions is minimal within the boarding houses, appropriate and recorded. The school has a clear complaints procedure and information about this is available to boarders. Boarders advise that staff respond to complaints and concerns raised and indicate that these are nearly always resolved informally. Boarders are all familiar with the formal system of raising complaints which is open to them. The school do not arrange guardians for boarders. Parents requiring guardians for their children are given details of organisations who will deal with this. There is a good awareness among staff and boarders of the fire safety precautions. All new boarders and staff receive fire safety instructions. Drills are carried out at different times of the day, fire safety equipment is checked regularly and a detailed record is kept. Staff show an appropriate regard for the privacy of boarders, routinely knock at bedrooms and wait to be invited to enter. House staff ensure that

both they and house prefects supervise boarders in a manner which does not compromise their right to privacy. Staff recruitment practice, although significantly improved, does not fully comply with guidance contained in the national minimum standards. Interview notes are not kept and there is inadequate documented evidence that references verified with the referee. All staff who are employed by the school have received an enhanced Criminal Records check prior to commencing employment. The school has a clear policy, followed by all staff, that ensures any adults who have access to boarders and boarding accommodation, are kept under staff supervision. It has a checking process for all staff, such as taxi drivers, who may have unsupervised access to boarders. The school has measures in place to ensure that boarders' accommodation is reserved for their own use and has rules, understood by all, about who can invite visitors to boarders' accommodation. The school is updating risk assessments for all aspects of the safety of the premises and the grounds. A health and safety consultant has been employed to complete this task. However, during the course of the inspection issues relating to boarders' safety in relation to windows were raised with the school. There are also some areas routinely accessed by boarders which have not yet been adequately risk assessed, these include use of the 'dandy path' by junior boys, and access to the beach.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a well thought through approach to providing boarders with a wide range of support and opportunities that encourages them to achieve educationally and socially to their fullest potential. It welcomes and celebrates the diversity of its boarders, with staff routinely promoting integration of the diverse groups. There is a wide range of activities outside of class time. Staff are active in encouraging boarders to take part in these activities and to introduce them to sport and recreational activities that are new to them. Boarders are clear that there are a number of staff they can go to for personal support. They also indicated that prefects are very skilled at offering support and guidance. Boarders also have access to a counsellor, and to an independent listener who are not members of the boarding or teaching staff. The pupil handbook provides information about these services. The school has an approach which values the diverse needs of its boarders and addresses any discrimination based on gender, disability, race cultural or linguistic background, sexuality, academic or sporting ability. The school has very good facilities for supporting pupils whose first language is not English through the International Centre.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The school has differing systems in place on each house to obtain the views of boarders when any developments at the school or changes in boarding practice are being considered. Young people indicated that if there are decisions to be made that are pertinent only to their boarding houses their views are sought and actioned quickly. However, they indicated if issues have to be taken to the senior management team they are not always quick to give them an answer. The school is currently in the process of implementing a school council, which will involve boarding representatives from each house representing boarders' views. The school has a positive attitude towards boarders' families and assisting pupils to maintain parental contact. There is provision on most houses for pupils to make contact with their families in private. On most, but not all houses, there's just about sufficient internet points for the numbers of boarders.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The school provides reasonable accommodation for its boarders. The accommodation is reasonably comfortable, heated and lit. There is evidence of significant investment in upgrading some of the boarding houses since the last key inspection. There is a good standard of cleanliness in the boarding houses. Boarding staff ensure that communal areas are as homely as possible within the confines of the size and age of the buildings. Some boarders have concerns about the efficiency of the heating systems and the adequacy of hot water supplies. These issues are all scheduled to be addressed as part of the boarding development plans.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school has a 'Statement of boarding principles' that covers all areas required by the boarding school national minimum standards. The Statement is up to date and available to parents, prospective parents, staff and boarders. All boarders are provided with a copy of their own boarding house pupil handbook, which contains all relevant information, including the 'Statement of boarding principles'. There is draft written guidance on the schools boarding policies in practice. This has only recently been presented in draft form for feedback from boarding staff. There is a Teachers handbook, which provided some information appertaining to boarding policies. There continues to be no designated senior member of staff regularly monitoring policy, records and practice on the boarding houses, despite a recommendation having been made about this issue following the last key inspection. Accident records are monitored by the Bursar and medicine records by the Matron but only the headmaster has designated overall responsibility for boarding practice. The number of staff available for the supervision of boarders is sufficient for the number of boarders, the activities they are engaged in and the different age and gender groups. Boarders told us they always know where to find a member of staff if they need one. This system is well supported by the school prefects, who play a significant role in supervising young people boarding at the school. Systems are in place to ensure boarders are able to maintain contact with staff when they are off site. Boarders know which member of staff is sleeping in each night. All staff with boarding duties have job descriptions. The school has introduced an induction programme for new boarding staff, who are mentored by an experienced house master. New staff are appreciative of the support they are provided and feel this is a key feature in recent boarding practice development.

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):

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- ensure that all boarding staff with responsibility for administering medicines receive training in safe administration of medication (NMS 15)
 - ensure that there is a formal system, known to all staff of passing information about medicines administered to boarders between the boarding houses and the medical centre at the beginning and end of each day (NMS 15)
 - ensure that a record is maintained indicating medication received into and disposed of by the school (NMS15)
 - revise the guidance obtained in the pupil organiser to ensure it adequately reflects the schools bullying policy (NMS 2)
 - ensure there is policy guidance for staff in the boarding handbook on behaviour, discipline and the use of punishments (NMS4)
 - ensure that recruitment and selection of staff follows all the guidance of standard 38.2 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS38)
 - undertake a check of all windows in the boarding houses to ensure their safety (NMS47)
 - develop risk assessments for pupil use of the beach and the dandy path (NMS 47)
 - ensure pupils on all houses have sufficient access to computers outside school hours to maintain regular contact with family overseas (NMS 19)
 - ensure that a named individual has responsibility for the management and leadership of practice and development of staff undertaking boarding responsibilities (NMS 23).

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for boarding school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders' health is promoted (NMS 6)
- safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records (NMS 7)
- boarders' receive first aid and health care as necessary (NMS 15)
- boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill (NMS 16)
- boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal problems (NMS 17)
- boarders receive good quality catering provision (NMS 24)
- boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals (NMS 25)
- boarders are suitably accommodated when ill (NMS 48)
- boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered (NMS 49).

Ofsted considers 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders are protected from bullying (NMS 2)
- boarders are protected from abuse (NMS 3)
- use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate (NMS 4)
- boarders' complaints are responded to appropriately (NMS 5)
- the operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare (NMS 13)
- boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school (NMS 22)
- boarders are protected from the risk of fire (NMS 26)
- the welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school (NMS 28)
- boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities (NMS 29)
- boarders' personal privacy is respected (NMS 37)
- there is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders (NMS 38)
- boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete recruitment checking procedures; all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises are supervised (NMS 39)
- boarders have their own accommodation, which is secure from public intrusion (NMS 41)
- boarders are protected from safety hazards (NMS 47)

Ofsted considers 2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders have access to a range and choice of activities (NMS 11)
- boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination (NMS 18)
- boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands (NMS 27)
- boarders have satisfactory provision to study (NMS 43)
- boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas (NMS 46)

Ofsted considers 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.

Annex A

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school (NMS 12)
- boarders receive personal support from staff (NMS 14)
- boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families (NMS 19)
- new boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in (NMS 21)
- boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school (NMS 30)
- there are sound relationships between staff and boarders (NMS 36)

Ofsted considers 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders' possessions and money are protected (NMS 20)
- boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation (NMS 40)
- boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation (NMS 42)
- boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities (NMS 44)
- boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day (NMS 45)
- boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school (NMS 50)

Ofsted considers 51 the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- a suitable statement of the school's principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff (NMS 1)
- there is clear leadership of boarding in the school (NMS 8)
- crises affecting boarders' welfare are managed effectively (NMS 9)
- the school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare (NMS 10)
- risk assessment and school record-keeping contribute to boarders' welfare (NMS 23)
- boarders are supervised adequately by staff (NMS 31)
- staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site (NMS 32)
- boarders are adequately supervised at night (NMS 33)
- boarders are looked after by staff which have specific boarding duties, and have received adequate induction and continued training (NMS 34)
- boarders are looked after by staff which follow clear boarding policies and practice (NMS 35)
- the welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 51)
- the welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

Ofsted considers 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.