

Lockers Park School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Kristen Judd
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Lockers Park School Lockers Park Lane HEMEL HEMPSTEAD Hertfordshire HP1 1TL
Telephone number	01442 251 712
Email	
Registered person	Lockers Park School
Head / Principal	
Nominated person	
Date of last inspection	20 November 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 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

Lockers Park was founded in 1874 by Henry Montagu Draper as a foundation school preparing boys for Rugby School, and is thus one of the earliest purpose-built preparatory schools in England. The school provides education for boys between the ages of seven and 13 years. The boarding accommodation is part of the school. The school has extensive grounds that include an all-weather astro-turf pitch, heated swimming pool, shooting range and tennis courts. Day boys and boarders enjoy the same facilities and opportunities.

The number of boarders varies each day. Some boarders board from Monday evening until Friday. In addition to the regular Monday to Friday boarders, the school is also flexible in offering day pupils a range of overnight stays.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection of the school. The purpose of the inspection was to assess the school against key national minimum standards and gauge improvements to the service since the previous inspection.

The care staff are a well-established group and well supported by a strong management team. Boarders at the school are happy and confident individuals who make the most of the opportunities on offer to them. The school provides good care for its boarding pupils and nurtures their personal development well. The shortfalls highlighted in this report do not significantly impact on the care that boarders receive.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection 10 recommendations were made. These were to make improvements to the recording of sanctions and to ensure that all recruitment records contain the required documentation. These recommendations have been met. Further recommendations in relation to the fire risk assessment and water temperatures have been adequately addressed. There are good systems in place for creating a safe environment for boarders.

Three further recommendations were made in relation to making improvements to the accommodation. Some of the communal areas have been redecorated and new furniture purchased. Boarders have a lockable facility available for their personal use. New windows have been fitted where needed to prevent draughts. The school continues to follow its development plan to make improvements to the boarding house. Recommendations in relation to staff training have been addressed. Boarders are looked after by experienced, trained staff who understand their individual needs.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Boarders are provided with a good level of care and their emotional and health needs are promoted. Health issues are discussed in personal, social, health and citizenship education within the school day. This helps boarders to be well informed and make appropriate choices

relating to their health. Boarders can and do approach members of staff to discuss any personal issues or problems. The school's nurse is qualified and experienced and offers other staff her healthcare and medical expertise. Healthcare practices are supported by written guidance to promote healthy lifestyles. There are arrangements in place to ensure that boarders have access to medical, optical and dental treatment while accommodated at the school. Information regarding the health and medical histories of each boarder is gained as part of the school's admission process. There is a confidential system for health records in the boarding house. The good standard of practice in meeting boarders' health needs is supported by a wide range of policies, which are readily available to staff and regularly updated. Parental consent forms that allow treatment and medical intervention are completed.

Staff have access to medication policies and procedures that make clear the procedures to follow regarding the administration of medication. The school nurse is responsible for the management and coordination of the school's dispensary and this is well managed. Staff maintain records of medication, medication routines and the administration of medication. However, on occasion medication records pertaining to an individual boarder are recorded on one sheet and as such the actual amounts of medication stored are unclear. Staff maintain clear records for any significant illness, accident or injury. There are systems in place to make sure that boarders have access to first aid and healthcare which meet their needs well. Boarders who become ill while at the school are appropriately isolated in the school's sick bay area and their health is appropriately monitored. If a boarder becomes ill staff are available to take them to a General Practitioner or the local hospital if required. Staff's communication with parents during such instances is informative and supportive.

There are good catering facilities in the school. Consequently, boarders have access to nutritious and well-prepared meals, which they generally enjoy. The school provides appropriate food for boarders who have dietary needs such as specific allergies. Catering staff receive training in food handling and hygiene, so that meals are produced safely. The school recognises that food is an area that remains high on the agenda so as a result, menus are continually re-visited in order to maintain levels of satisfaction.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements in place to safeguard boarders from possible abuse. Boarding staff have received safeguarding training and fully demonstrate their understanding of the procedures and protocols. Senior managers have also attended advanced training so that they are given the knowledge and skills needed to perform the function of 'designated person' in their school. Since the last inspection there have been no allegations made against staff or incidents of a child protection nature. There are good systems in place to ensure that staff are aware of the whereabouts of the boarders. There have been no incidents of a missing child at the school. Staff are aware of the need to work together to provide a safe place for boarders.

Boarders know that bullying behaviour is not tolerated and staff are well informed of current practice and concerns. For example, the dangers of cyber-bullying are emphasised in the school's policy. Boarders have a clear understanding of what they should do if someone is making them unhappy. They say that one of the best things about the school is the friendships between boarders and confirm that bullying is not an issue. The school has policies and practices regarding discipline and behaviour which boys generally feel are fair. Rewards for achievement and effort

are regularly given. The behaviour of boarders on all days during the inspection was exemplary. Records indicate that minimal sanctions are issued. Sanctions are generally earlier bedtimes. The school rewards system is known to boarders. The use of discipline is fair and appropriate; the school focuses on rewards for positive behaviour which encourages positive attitudes between boarders. Boarders indicate that they know who to approach if they are unhappy. Staff, parents and other stakeholders benefit from the school's complaints procedure. Concerns raised are dealt with informally and any correspondence is recorded on the school central files. However, there is no centralised record of complaints received. The headteacher confirmed that no formal complaints have been made to the school in regard to boarding since the previous inspection.

Boarders are familiar with the fire evacuation procedures. Regular fire drills take place in the boarding unit. A fire risk assessment of the school and boarding provision is in place. Fire fighting equipment is regularly serviced and tested, together with emergency lighting and fire alarm systems. The school works closely with the local fire authority. Boarders live in an environment where they are protected from the risk of fire. Sleeping, living and recreational areas, indoors and in the school grounds, are free from significant hazards, therefore ensuring boarders' safety. Boarders confirm that they feel safe and no concerns were raised. Overall, there are good systems in place for creating a safe environment for boarders. There are robust staff recruitment procedures in place. All staff have the appropriate checks undertaken before they start work at the school and there are clear records maintained. The school is rigorous in its measures to protect the boarders from unsupervised contact with adults who have not been checked and ensures that visitors and contractors to the school are not admitted unaccompanied unless there is evidence that they have been suitably checked.

Staff have access to guidance that addresses issues of privacy and confidentiality. Boarders generally feel staff respect their privacy. Boarders are happy with the bathing and showering facilities. However, some feel that not all staff knock on bedroom doors. Staff spoken to demonstrate an awareness to be discreet and respectful of the young people's personal space.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Boarders are happy and confident when in the company of care staff and converse with them openly and confidently, demonstrating the good relationship between them. They are able to identify a number of the school's staff that they can turn to if they have a concern. The questionnaires completed by boarders confirm that most of them enjoy boarding. Boarders relate well to one another; when asked what is best about boarding they say 'being with our friends'. Staff know boarders in their care well. They are very much aware of each boarder's uniqueness, including their individual strengths and weaknesses. One parent commented: 'My son loves boarding and is thriving at Locker's Park.'

The school demonstrates a commitment in practice to providing equal opportunities to all boarders. The school positively promotes the integration of all boarders. Staff are aware of the cultural diversities of its boarders and the difficulties faced by overseas boarders attending an English school for the first time. Their comments about feeling integrated, supported by the staff and other boarders are positive. They are clear that they are made welcome and do not feel isolated or discriminated against. Activities and groups are open to all boarders and there is no sort of exclusion. Cultural differences are recognised and embraced. Special diets are

provided if required. Boarders commented that the relationships between boarders are positive, with no discrimination.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The systems for boarders to contribute to the operation of the boarding school are largely on an informal basis. Boarders spoken to during the inspection are able to voice their views on occasions. For example, during the inspection they were asked to vote, by a show of hands, on a new flavour of pizza to be introduced. However, a meeting to discuss boarding issues has not been held for some time. This restricts the boarders' opportunity to discuss the boarding provision on a formal basis.

Boarders are generally able to maintain regular contact with their parents and families. Most boarders have mobile telephones and have access to pay telephones in house; however, they find these expensive, and some boarders request that their parents ring them back on these facilities. Following concerns regarding the use of mobile telephones the school has implemented a temporary ban on these telephones in school. This is with the exception of overseas boarders. The school has engaged with relevant professionals to work with it and provide advice to all pupils in school regarding the safe use of mobile telephones. The school acknowledges that this has been an unsettling time and is actively working to resolve the contact arrangements while ensuring the safe use of mobile telephones.

There is a good process of induction and guidance for new boarders. There is a weekly 'Cub Scout' club and day pupils are encouraged to flexi-board when they attend the club as an introduction to boarding. Day pupils can also undertake activities and stay for supper, which also provides an introduction to the boarding routines. Boarders spoken to confirm that they were supported well when they began to board at the school. There are good staff and boarder relationships. The general view of boarders is that staff look after them well and fairly, and communication between staff and boarders is positive.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The standard of boarding accommodation is adequate, providing an adequately comfortable and safe environment for boarders. Boarders share dormitory accommodation. They say that they enjoy sharing with other boarders and are happy with the sleeping provision. The bedrooms are clean and well ventilated. The common room is functional and is used when boarders wish to watch television. Some of the furniture is worn and there is limited space. Boarders have small settees in the dormitories; however, there is a lack of communal space for boarders to relax and socialise together. There is an appropriate number of washing facilities. The school continues to follow its development plan to make further improvements to the boarding house. This work demonstrates the commitment of the school in working towards improving boarding facilities for all boarders. Staff work hard to provide a clean and welcoming environment for boarders and encourage the personalisation of sleeping areas.

Boarders' possessions and money are protected. Valuable possessions such as money and mobile telephones are kept securely on the behalf of boarders as appropriate. There is a locked security space for each boarder on the main landing.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school has strong leadership. Staff understand the importance and the value attributed to areas related to the academic and boarding parts of school life. Good systems are in place for the effective monitoring of records by the headteacher and head of care. Both the headteacher and head of boarding are very accessible and often visible throughout the evenings and weekends. Clear line management structures, a good team ethos and effective systems of communication contribute effectively to boarders' welfare.

Boarders are supervised well by experienced staff who understand their needs and help them to progress and achieve. All boarding staff have job descriptions that clearly set out their role in boarding and lines of accountability. The school gives appropriate priority to staff training. This ensures that staff are skilled and competent to carry out their responsibilities and duties effectively in relation to the promotion of the welfare of boarders. The matrons meet regularly to discuss the operation of the boarding house and the care provided to boarders. However, boarding staff do not have their performance annually appraised or formally supervised. This potentially weakens the current good management of boarders as staff are not being formally supported to reflect on or improve their practice. Boarders confirm that they always know who is on duty, who is responsible for them and can always find a member of staff when they need to, including at night.

A clear statement of how the school operates is available for parents and others needing this information. The school website is also easily accessed and provides a very good level of information and is kept up to date. Suitable information regarding the boarding principles and practice is available to parents, boarders and staff. Comments received from parents are supportive of the boarding house approach to working with, supporting and encouraging young people to achieve. Comments include: 'I think that the school does an excellent job in looking after my son in my absence' and 'the head of boarding is excellent, we are very happy to leave our children in his care and we are impressed with the new headmaster's greater commitment to boarding and its benefits.' As in any large community there were some negative comments but these mainly related to the recent suspension of mobile telephones in school while systems are being reviewed. Overall the positive feedback from parents and boarders alike outweighed the negative comments.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Evidence supports a good commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Boarders receive individual care to meet their individual needs.

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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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 that a separate written record is maintained of all medication, giving the name, date and medication/treatment, which is signed by the responsible member of staff (Breach of national minimum standard 15.12)
- ensure a written record is kept of all complaints and their outcome, for regular review by the headteacher or a senior member of staff (Breach of national minimum standard 5.5)
- ensure staff supervision of boarders avoids intruding unnecessarily on boarders; this is in relation to staff knocking before entering bedrooms (Breach of national minimum standard 37.1)
- ensure that boarders are able to contact parents/carers in private at reasonable times without having to seek permission from, or inform, staff. Where a pupil does not have access to a mobile phone, the school can demonstrate that boarders have the opportunity for private contact with parents/carers (Breach of national minimum standard 19.3)
- ensure there are formal opportunities (e.g. school councils, meetings, surveys) for boarders to express views on relevant aspects of boarding provision, either directly or through representatives and that these views are taken into account in the development and practice of boarding (Breach of national minimum standard 12.2)
- ensure that there is a range and choice of common room or other recreational areas available to boarders outside school time, in the evenings and at weekends (Breach of national minimum standard 46.2)
- ensure there is a process for the regular review of the performance of each member of staff with boarding duties. (Breach of national minimum standard 34.5)