

Care service inspection report

Ardvreck School

School Care Accommodation Service

Gwydyr Road

Crieff

PH7 4EX

Telephone: 01764 653112

Inspected by: Marion Neil

Type of inspection: Unannounced

Inspection completed on: 8 February 2013



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Service provided by:

Ardvreck School Ltd

Service provider number:

SP2003003589

Care service number:

CS2006115069

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Summary

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection following other regulatory activity. For example, if we have to take enforcement action to make the service improve, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

We gave the service these grades

Quality of Care and Support	5	Very Good
Quality of Environment	5	Very Good
Quality of Staffing	5	Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership	5	Very Good

What the service does well

- Ideal systems were in place to encourage pupils to talk freely to a member of staff of their choosing.
- First rate training opportunities, including ideal induction for new staff, were in place, to ensure staff are up to date with best practice.
- Boarding staff understood and responded to the emotional needs of all the pupils. They had a very good understanding of the pupils' development needs.

What the service could do better

- The school may now wish to consider reviewing the school's system for recording the purchase, storage, administration and storage of medication, in line with current best practice guidance, outlined in this report.
- The school may wish to consider further extending the school's professional development and appraisal system to include all staff. We suggested that a formal support meeting, eg held at the end of each half term, would provide all house staff with formal opportunities to discuss their care practice, and raise concerns or issues in a formal setting.

- The school now needs to further develop the whole school approach to quality assurance. They may wish to consider a joint approach to self assessment, involving both boarding and education staff.

What the service has done since the last inspection

- The new Headmaster has made a positive impact on the school. Under his guidance significant changes have taken place, resulting in a whole school approach to boarding and education.
- The school has made use of the services offered by the police for informing parents and pupils about the dangers of drugs and internet safety.
- The school has improved the communication with parents/carers, in particular with overseas and military parents.

Conclusion

Ardreck School continues to offer high quality boarding to pupils. They have created a homely atmosphere in the boarding houses, where pupils feel safe, looked after and valued. Pupils have ideal opportunities to give their views. The ethos and culture of the school is open, transparent and supportive.

Who did this inspection

Marion Neil

Lay assessor: Not Applicable

1 About the service we inspected

Before the 1 April 2011, this service was registered with the Care Commission. On this date the new body, Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland, (SCSWIS), known as the Care Inspectorate, took over the work of the Care Commission, including the registration of care services. This means that from the 1 April 2011 this service has continued its registration under the new body, the Care Inspectorate. The school's conditions of registration state:

- 1 To provide a school care accommodation service to a maximum of 100 pupils.
- 2 Junior House will provide accommodation to a maximum of 44 pupils.
- 3 MacLellan House will provide accommodation to a maximum of 29 pupils.
- 4 Erskine House will provide accommodation to a maximum of 27 pupils.
- 5 To comply with the current staffing schedule attached, dated 15 September 2006, which must be displayed together with the certificate.
- 6 The school care accommodation service will be provided during the school terms.

Ardreck School, an independent preparatory school for pupils aged 8 to 13, has a maximum roll for boarding of 100 pupils. 84 boarders were resident at the time of the inspection. It provides accommodation for pupils from the UK and overseas within three boarding houses. These comprise Junior House in the main building and Erskine and McClellan, for senior girls and boys respectively, in chalet-style houses within the school grounds. The school is located on the outskirts of the town of Crieff in Perthshire. Pupils have access to a range of facilities including gymnasium, swimming pool and outdoor all-weather sports pitches for sport and leisure, as well as woodland and nearby hills.

Ardreck School had adopted ARDVRECK as an acronym to represent its eight aims, based on its shared vision that the school:

- Allows every child to grow up away from the artificial pressures of modern-day life.
- Realises the unique qualities of each child, treating them as individuals.
- Develops their potential, challenging their strengths and promoting their confidence.
- Values mutual respect, self-discipline and standards that will promote integrity to carry a child through life.
- Relishes every opportunity for fun, fresh-air and sporting challenges, exploiting its unique location and excellent facilities.
- Excels at providing a high class education which promotes a life-long love of learning and interest in the world at large.
- Cares for its pupils in a warm and friendly environment.

- Keeps the world at bay until at 13+ when pupils are then ready to move on to the challenges of life, wherever that may be.

Based on the findings of this inspection this service has been awarded the following grades:

Quality of Care and Support - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Environment - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Staffing - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Management and Leadership - Grade 5 - Very Good

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change following other regulatory activity. You can find the most up-to-date grades for this service by visiting our website www.careinspectorate.com or by calling us on 0845 600 9527 or visiting one of our offices.

2 How we inspected this service

The level of inspection we carried out

In this service we carried out a low intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections when we are satisfied that services are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care.

What we did during the inspection

This report was written following an unannounced inspection visit on 05 February 2013 and 2 arranged visits on 07 February and the 08 February 2013. The inspection visit was carried out by Marion Neil, Inspector, Care Inspectorate. The inspection visits took approximately 18 hours, in total. There were 84 pupils using the service when we visited.

We carried out a low intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections when we are satisfied that services are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care. We looked at all 4 themes - the Quality of Care and Support, the Quality of the Environment, the Quality of Staffing and the Quality of Management and Leadership. We looked at evidence for 2 Quality statements in each of these themes. We were satisfied with the overall participation of the pupils and their parents/carers in the school's decision making processes. Because of this, we are reporting our findings for Quality statements 1.1, 2.1, 3.1 and 4.1 under 1.1.

The service, as requested, sent us an Annual Return and a Self Assessment form. We talked to the Headmaster and the Head of Pastoral Care and boarding staff about the service and the progress made since the last inspection visit. We looked at a sample of the service's policies and procedures. We sampled evidence to support what had been written in the service's Self Assessment, under the Quality Statements we looked at.

We looked at a sample of the service's records during the visit. These included:

- certificate of registration and staffing schedule,
- public liability insurance,
- records of medication administered,
- accidents and incidents,
- written risk assessments,
- photographs of pupils taking part in a variety of activities,
- newsletters,
- questionnaires and surveys carried out by the service

- consultation with the pupils,
- a sample of pupils' care and education plans,
- information on the service's website,
- minutes of meetings including meetings with the Board of Governors, boarding house meetings, pupil council minutes, pupils' house meetings,
- and the service's self evaluation and quality assurance systems.

We met with 17 pupils. We talked to them about how well they liked boarding at Ardvreck School and what activities they had the opportunity to take part in. We talked to members of the boarding house teams about their child care practice. We observed staff's child care practice during the 2nd visit. We gave feedback to the Headmaster and the Head of Pastoral Care on the final day of our inspection visits.

Throughout this report the children and young people who board at Ardvreck School are referred to as pupils. Boarding house staff includes housemistresses, housemaster, assistant housemistresses, matrons and gap year students.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the school for their hospitality throughout our visits.

Grading the service against quality themes and statements

We inspect and grade elements of care that we call 'quality themes'. For example, one of the quality themes we might look at is 'Quality of care and support'. Under each quality theme are 'quality statements' which describe what a service should be doing well for that theme. We grade how the service performs against the quality themes and statements.

Details of what we found are in Section 3: The inspection

Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)

In any year we may decide on specific aspects of care to focus on during our inspections. These are extra checks we make on top of all the normal ones we make during inspection. We do this to gather information about the quality of these aspects of care on a national basis. Where we have examined an inspection focus area we will clearly identify it under the relevant quality statement.

Fire safety issues

We do not regulate fire safety. Local fire and rescue services are responsible for checking services. However, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant fire and rescue services so they may consider what action to

take. You can find out more about care services' responsibilities for fire safety at www.firelawscotland.org

The annual return

Every year all care services must complete an 'annual return' form to make sure the information we hold is up to date. We also use annual returns to decide how we will inspect the service.

Annual Return Received: Yes - Electronic

Comments on Self Assessment

Every year all care services must complete a 'self assessment' form telling us how their service is performing. We check to make sure this assessment is accurate.

The Care Inspectorate received a fully completed Self assessment document from the school. This identified what the school did well, along with the sources of evidence for these areas, and proposed improvements. However, the Self assessment form did not always reflect the outcomes for the pupils.

The school may now wish to consider using the Self assessment document as part of their overall quality assurance of their service. (See area for improvement under Quality statement 4.4). The school should then provide detailed examples of their high quality practice and how this impacts on the outcomes for the pupils.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

Fifteen questionnaires were returned to us by pupils. All of them were very positive about the standard of boarding at the school. Pupils comments from these questionnaires are quoted under the relevant Quality statements in this report.

Taking carers' views into account

We spoke with 2 parents during the inspection visits. Their views are quoted under the relevant Quality statements in this report.

3 The inspection

We looked at how the service performs against the following quality themes and statements. Here are the details of what we found.

Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.

Service strengths

We found that the school was performing exceptionally well in the areas we looked at under this Quality statement. We considered the evidence for Quality statements 2.1, 3.1 and 4.1 and this evidence is included under this Quality statement. We looked at the following evidence to support our findings -

- We talked to a group of 17 pupils about how they found the school, what they liked best and what they thought the school could do to improve.
- We attended a dorm captain's meeting.
- The school's formal consultation process, including - pupil council, dorm captain meetings, house meetings, pupils and staff, morning de-brief, communications log, and suggestions box.
- We took account of the informal opportunities that pupils had to talk to staff - chatting over breaks, staff sitting with pupils at meal times, informal chats over supper, availability of staff - both house staff and gap year staff, eg gap year staff sitting outside rooms until pupils settle at night.
- The school's involvement with parents/carers, including - e-mail correspondence with parents, regular newsletters, ideal information boards, the school's end of term and half term show of work for parents/carers, telephone contact, additional regular feedback to parents/carers, on request.
- We took account of the additional family support, provided by school staff.
- The school's regular surveys of pupils and parents eg the school took part in a recent national survey of independent boarding schools, carried out by an external consultant.

- We considered the information provided by the girls from Erskine House, who made up a survey and completed it for us to let us know about school life at Ardvreck.
- We took account of the information given to us in questionnaires returned to us by 14 pupils.

We gave the school a grade 6 - excellent for the areas we looked at under Quality statements 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, and 4.1.

There was outstanding participation and communication with pupils. This was supported in an ideal way by the inclusive approach of house staff and matrons. We saw an example of this way of working when we attended the dorm captain's meeting. This meeting was attended by the dorm captain of each dorm in the junior house. Throughout the meeting we saw that a caring ethos was promoted by staff eg we saw the teamwork and caring attitude of junior pupils. This was promoted in an ideal way by the house mistress. Throughout the meeting she supported pupils by using appropriate praise and encouragement. The result was that pupils were very open and keen to discuss difficulties and how these could be resolved eg supporting any pupils who may be homesick, encouraging pupils to settle down at lights out by leading by example.

When we visited the different houses, we saw exemplary evidence of consultation with pupils. Pupils were regularly asked to give their opinions and ideas for trips and outings, weekend activities, and food preferences. This was confirmed by speaking with house staff, matrons and catering staff. In a recent article in the magazine of the Independent School Parent Association, about the role of Matron, one of Ardvreck's Matrons wrote -

"For a positive boarding experience it is vital that children view the boarding house as a home, of which they have 'ownership', and that they have the opportunity to make decisions."

Working in this way means that pupils know that their views are valuable and that staff listen to them. Examples of the ways in which pupils suggestions were taken forward by staff included -

- Senior house boys got a new heating system.
- New paths - this was recommended in a pupil council committee meeting.
- Pupils told us - "most things we say goes into practice - if they are sensible."

When we spoke with 17 pupils they confirmed that there was ideal consultation at the school - their comments included -

"It's extremely friendly - like a gigantic family."

"The dorms work really well."

Pupils told us that "Everyone co-operates especially in the junior houses where there are captains."

The Head of Catering confirmed that she regularly consults pupils. She had recently attended a pupil council meeting. She said that some suggestions were impractical, eg ketchup with every meal, which was not allowed. Other suggestions, along with feedback from staff, resulted in changes eg milk at break time, more variety for snacks, plus for older boys, malt loaf or jam sandwiches.

Pupils who spoke with us told us that they were regularly consulted. They said that consultation included -

- Making suggestions in the food committee meetings.
- Suggestion boxes in houses.
- Pupil voice/council regular meetings.
- Choosing DVDs for Saturday movie time.
- Stating preferences for dorm sharing, with their preferences taken into account by House staff.
- Raising funds through Bake Sale, with the proceeds from these regular sales going to a charity and equipment/resources of their choice.

Not one of the 17 pupils we spoke with had any suggestions to make to us about how the school could be improved.

The Head of Pastoral Care confirmed that the focus of the Pupil Voice had changed. This meant that pupils now had exceptional opportunities to talk to different staff teams in school eg maintenance and catering. She confirmed that this was working very well, with changes including what was on offer at break times, and the new paths to rugby pitches.

Pupils views from the survey given to us by pupils who board in Erskine included -

What is the best thing about boarding?

"Friends and people who look after you."

"I think evenings are the best thing or Saturday night as we have free time and on Saturday we watch a movie."

What is your favourite thing about Erskine?

"The homely feel!"

"You always stay with your friends and everyone supports you."

Pupils views from the questionnaires returned to the Care Inspectorate included -

"We have lots of choices, if we want to stay in the boarding house in free time we can, if an adult is with us. We can go out and play also."

"I love the school because I have good friends and staff help me with my prep."

In an example of best practice, the school consulted pupils about their academic subjects, as well as their experiences of boarding. This meant that the school had ideal feedback from pupils about ways to improve the curriculum, teaching practice and the boarding experience.

We spoke with 2 parents/carers of boarding pupils. They confirmed that they were very satisfied with the school. They could not praise the school highly enough in terms of the support offered to families and their children. They told us about the encouraging and inclusive approach of staff, which extended to their wider families, eg grandparents welcomed at match days.

As stated above, other examples of consultation included getting parents/carers views and those of school leavers. From the surveys we looked at, the following comments were made by parents/carers -

"I feel more involved in their education and their lives than I did when they were down the road (attending local primary)."

"It's down to earth where children are allowed to be children - it's a totally all round school, and just like a big family."

"What I think is most distinctive about Ardvreck is how happy and active the pupils are."

Comments from school leavers included the following -

"The school has fulfilled its purpose as a school and taught me so much academically, but Ardvreck is more than a school, it is a community of pupils, staff and the entire behind the scenes management."

Seeking pupils and parents/carers views formally in this way gives the school ideal feedback about areas for improvement.

In conclusion, the school had a caring and supportive ethos. The Headmaster and Head of Pastoral Care actively promoted this ethos. This meant that the boarding house staff and matrons had an inclusive and consultative approach with pupils and with their parents/carers. The pupils told us that they were very happy at the school. They said that staff supported them very well.

Areas for improvement

The Head of Pastoral Care told us that there was some consultation with pupils about the recruitment of new boarding staff. The school may wish to consider the further development of pupil involvement in recruitment. Examples of this could include - formally seeking pupils views about staff during their induction/probationary period; asking pupils what qualities they think are ideal in new boarding house staff; involving them in the interview process.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 3

We ensure that service users' health and wellbeing needs are met.

Service strengths

We found that the school was performing very well in the areas we looked at under this Quality statement. We found that in some areas, there were examples of excellent practice. We gave the service a grade 5 - very good, for the areas we looked at under this Quality statement. We concluded this after -

- Speaking with the Headmaster and the Head of Pastoral Care, Matrons and house staff, gap year students, pupils, and 2 parents/carers.
- Looking at a variety of records, including minutes of meetings held with pupils, those held with staff and those held with the school's Board of Governors.
- Looking at how the school manages medication for pupils - including the purchase, storage, administration and disposal of medication and the records to support this.
- Talking to the Head of Catering about the school's commitment to healthy eating, and looking at sample menus.
- Talking to both pupils and staff about how well the school promotes active play and the opportunities pupils have to fulfil their potential.

When talking to house staff and matrons we found that the school had developed a first rate system to ensure that pupils were very well supported in the boarding houses. An example of this was that the house mistress of the junior house was also a matron and had no teaching responsibilities. She told us that this had the following advantages - she is available during the day eg this helped if a pupil was off colour or had a different time to phone home because of the time difference abroad. It meant that she was around at second break to support pupils when changing for games or collecting books etc. She said that working in the matrons team, meant that she could organize any additional support very easily, if this was required.

The school had a very strong tradition of providing support for pupils and their families eg if there was a family bereavement, or parents were abroad. The Head of Pastoral Care told us that the "school aims for an air of normality, but the children all know that the support is there," if they require it. Other examples of additional support included ongoing family work to support parents, special arrangements for individual pupils to start school a bit later in the morning, additional visits to the school during the school holidays. Working in this way resulted in the school gaining a reputation as a school which was supportive of families. An example of this was that the Caledonian Trust recently made a film featuring some of Ardvreck's pupils. The film promoted the boarding culture to army families on deployment.

Staff who spoke to us had an ideal understanding of pupils' development needs. They promoted healthy, active lifestyles. Pupils had a wide range of opportunities to take part in lots of different sports. These opportunities were balanced by a variety of activities after school. Pupils told us that activities included -

- playing outside on the all weather pitch eg touch rugby, football, basket ball,
- taking part in organised sports eg swimming, judo, karate, archery, shooting, rugby, cricket,
- music - almost all of the 17 pupils who talked to us said that they played one or more musical instrument,
- playing in the school's pipe band - pupils told us that the pipe band was taking part in a championship event this term,
- goes for walks, especially in the summer,
- mountain biking,
- and arts and crafts activities.

Providing a variety of opportunities for pupils to take part in a wide range of activities means that they can try out different sports as well as pursuing their interests in music and arts and crafts. The result was that their school life was a busy one, with a number of opportunities for individual pupils to fulfil their potential. This was confirmed by pupils in the leavers' questionnaire -

"I will miss the dens and dams and playing with my wee second form buddies."

"My time at Ardvreck has been crazy, there have been so many different activities and such a wide range of things to do. I was never really bored as there was always something I could do."

We looked at how the school managed the pupils' health needs. We found that the school had records in place to record medication given to pupils, along with any pupil concerns or symptoms. A local general practitioner (GP) visited the school weekly, and held a surgery. The school had strong links with a local pharmacy. Very commendably all boarders were signed up for the minor ailments scheme at the local pharmacy. Where any pupil had a life long medical condition, eg a severe allergy, asthma, or diabetes, a robust system was in place to manage these conditions. In an example of best practice, each pupil with a life long condition had a separate medical box with emergency medication. The medical box included a photograph of the pupil. The individual medical box was taken by staff to away matches or when the pupil went on trips and outings. This minimised the risks of a pupil being away from school without the appropriate medication.

Other examples of best practice in the management of pupils' health needs included

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- home sports matches were supported by the school nurse,
- a link was in place with the National Health Service diabetes nurse, who was visiting the school regularly,
- reminders were in place to ensure that all staff received epi-pen training,
- a daily briefing was in place for staff to bring any medical incidents to their attention.
- pupils had access to the matrons throughout the school day, eg if they felt unwell.

Boarding staff worked very well with teaching staff. This meant that any concerns about individual pupil's progress were quickly identified. This resulted in the provision of appropriate support eg testing for dyslexia by an educational psychologist. Other additional support for pupils was provided by optomonotrists, and the Moving and Learning Centre at Boness. In an example of very good practice, the school's gap year students supported pupils in class, in their role as classroom assistants. Other support duties included, if required, help at prep time, plus along with other staff, additional support was provided eg for scribing during exams. Gap year students we spoke with confirmed that they had quickly established first rate relationships with the pupils. Using gap year students in this way meant that pupils had additional staff that they could go to for additional support.

The school had robust systems in place to manage incidents or issues. An update was provided to staff at a daily pastoral staff meeting. This gave staff the opportunity to receive a verbal update, to meet to discuss incidents or concerns, and to confer with other staff. In an example of best practice the minutes of this meeting were circulated daily to staff by e-mail. This meant that all staff had a written record of incidents or concerns. The Head of Pastoral Care had a first rate understanding of her legal duty to notify the Care Inspectorate of serious incidents and accidents. The school, in further examples of best practice, kept records of any notifications to the public health medical officer. They had a spreadsheet in place to record pupils' immunizations. Regular, termly, health and safety meetings were in place. These meetings included a termly audit of accidents. Working in this way is following best practice guidance. It means that any areas or times of day where accidents were regularly occurring, could be easily identified. The result was that the school could then make improvements to minimise the risk of accidents.

The Head of Catering told us that the kitchen staff were kept up to date regarding any pupil's nutritional health needs eg allergies. Healthy eating was promoted throughout the school. Examples included fruit in the dining room for the junior pupils, and fruit in each of the houses for senior pupils; the morning trolley includes fruit and low sugar juice; afternoon snack option could be fruit as well; weekly menus were displayed for pupils. Pupils were encouraged to think about foods in different contexts, eg the Head of Catering linked with the geography teacher to make Bakewell tart from the Lake District; the school's science and engineering week, included a science lunch for the whole school. This event included pupils giving feedback on different coloured foods and the effect that the colour had on their taste - green, red and blue mashed potatoes - some pupils really liked the colored food. Other science and engineering links included -

- dry ice cocktail sticks,
- smoking fruit juice,
- building the most impressive banana split possible.

The Head of Catering confirmed that pupils' food preferences were taken into account when developing the menu. An external nutritionist had analysed the menu and the Head of Catering told us that she would be updating the menus in the future. Other examples of the school's commitment to healthy eating included -

- all staff, including pantry staff who don't actually cook, have completed elementary food hygiene training,
- the Head of Catering was due to attend training in cross contamination this term,

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- the learning from this training would, she said, be rolled out to other staff,
 - the school used local suppliers, including local fruit, vegetables and dairy products.

Working in this way meant that the pupils were encouraged by school staff to make healthy eating choices. The work on healthy eating was supported by work in the school's Personal, Social and Health Education, (PSHE), programme. This programme included -

- healthy living and healthy lifestyles,
- safety,
- bullying,
- study skills,
- life skills eg cooking and laundry,
- and transition to senior school.

We saw first rate examples of promotional materials for all aspects of the PSHE programme throughout the school and houses. Providing a balanced PSHE programme helps meet pupils development needs. It teaches them about the importance of healthy living and encourages them to make appropriate choices.

When we spoke with 2 parents, they told us that they were very happy with the level of support provided by the school. Their comments included -

"Children can be children for as long as possible, it is the complete package."
"Each one (referring to her children) has arrived here, loved it from the minute they come and has thrived. We chose this particularly as we are a forces family."

Pupils comments in the questionnaires returned to us included -

"I like how when you are a boarder you feel like you're in a big family and slot into life easily and if you have any problems you can tell someone."

"I feel like I am at home"

"I love this school because I have good friends and the staff help me with my prep."

and comments in the Erskine survey included -

"You have freedom and responsibility so it's a good balance."

"You become more independent."

"That everyone is like a big family."

In conclusion, we found that the school staff teams had a first rate understanding of the pupils' development needs. They promoted independence and responsibility as part of a healthy living programme. This included healthy food choices and active lifestyles. The care and attention of the boarding house staff could be summed up by the junior pupils' understanding of matron's role -

"She looks after us when we are upset, or worried, she sings all the time, mends us when we fall in the playground, organises phone calls home, cuts our toenails, makes us hot chocolate, takes us to the park, reminds the tooth fairy to visit, laughs a lot, bakes cakes with us, does nit checks, reads great stories, listens to us, washes our clothes, has the best tuck shop! She is in charge of the tooth cleaning club, looks after us when we are sick in the night ... lets us get muddy in the dams - but not when we are wearing our kilts! Matron is the sunlight of Junior House!"

Reference - Meet the Matron, Independent School Parent Association magazine, Autumn 2012.

Areas for improvement

Although the school had systems in place to record the administration of medication, we found that this was not, at the time of our visits, following best practice guidance. The school may now wish to consider reviewing the school's system for recording the purchase, storage, administration and storage of medication. We talked to the school nurse, school matrons and Head of Pastoral Care about the best practice guidance to follow. We sent guidance on medicines recording to the school.

We advised that any review should include a half termly audit of the recording of medicines in the houses and in the medical centre. The school may also wish to consider further developing their links with the local pharmacy. We advised that it would be following best practice guidance to ask the local pharmacist to carry out an annual audit for the school. The school may also wish to consider asking the pharmacist to provide house staff, including gap year students, with further training in the administration of medication.

At the time of writing this report the school nurse confirmed that she had already implemented some changes to the school's systems. She told us that she would implement further changes in line with the best practice guidance provided to the school by us. She confirmed that the local pharmacist had agreed to assist the school. The school nurse told us that she had made links with another independent boarding school, in order to share best practice guidance.

The school may wish to consider applying for a school healthy living award and eco school's award. A pupil had mentioned in one of the school's surveys that the school should re-cycle more. Developing a joint committee with pupils to look at a healthy living award and eco award would confirm the very good practice already in place. It would provide the school with further opportunities to develop pupil's awareness of their responsibilities.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 2: Quality of Environment

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the environment within the service.

Service strengths

What we looked at for this Quality statement is reported under Quality statement 1.1. Based on these findings, we gave the school a grade 6 - excellent, for the areas we looked at under these Quality statements.

Areas for improvement

These are detailed under Quality statement 1.1.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 2

We make sure that the environment is safe and service users are protected.

Service strengths

We found that the school was performing to a very high standard in the areas we looked at under this Quality statement. We concluded this after a tour of the school, and an examination of associated records. These included -

- risk assessments,
- minutes of the health and safety committee,
- accident and incident records,
- the school's policies on child protection and health and safety,
- audits of accidents and incidents,
- minutes of the board of governors meetings.

We gave the school a grade 5 - very good, for the areas we looked at under this Quality statement.

We found that the school made highly effective use of its first rate environment. The school grounds were used very well by the pupils for energetic outdoor play and sports. We saw that there were robust systems in place regarding the safety of the children. These included -

- coded key pads in the houses,
- the recent upgrade of the paths to the sports area,
- safety in the snow,
- evidence that maintenance issues were dealt with timeously,
- appropriate risk assessments for the outdoor environment, activities, trips and outings,
- regular safety checks on electrical equipment,
- environmental health report for the kitchen area,
- fire safety report.

Children who spoke to us confirmed that they felt safe in the school and boarding houses. The pupils from Erskine house confirmed this in the surveys that they gave us - comments included -

"Yes, I feel extremely safe." "Yes, having friends gives me a good feeling of security."
"Yes, because all my friends are here, and 2 teachers and codes on the doors." "Yes, very safe, especially with 3 big guard dogs."

Ensuring pupils safety in this way was an integral part of the school's commitment to providing them with a home from home.

The school had an ongoing refurbishment programme in place. Improvements since the previous inspection visit included - upstairs showers replaced in the Junior house, kitchen replaced, common room painted and re-furbished, with pupil involvement (see Quality statement 1.1), new carpets in the upstairs dorms in the Junior house, and new plates for toast. In Erskine house, new fire sounders were now throughout the house, with door guards fitted to the kitchen and common room doors. The school's ongoing refurbishment programme included painting the outside woodwork, the downstairs dorms, and replacing curtains and carpets in one of the other houses. Very commendably, the school had a 5 year maintenance plan in place for each of the houses. This included replacing resources and was based on a health and safety, structural and security assessment.

Working in this way is following best practice guidance as it clearly identified the following details for each task -where, what, cost, whether completed, and the priority for implementing the task. Working towards a clearly defined refurbishment programme meant that the school ensured that the accommodation was of a high standard.

The article in the Independent School Parents Association Magazine confirmed that pupils were involved in any re-furbishment -

"Every child has their own bed covers and decorates the dorms and bed spaces with posters, family photos and soft toys. Recently the girls Common Room was re-vamped and painted. The girls were very excited and asked for a Grand Opening. I (housemistress) invited all the staff while the girls organised sparkling apple juice and biscuits for the visitors. The bursar was asked to cut the pink ribbon that was pinned across the door, and was told by the girls in no uncertain terms that there was nothing 'common' about their room and she was to unveil the new "Sitting Room."

This example confirmed that the school was committed to giving pupils opportunity to make decisions and to take responsibility.

Pupils who spoke with us confirmed that discipline issues were dealt with firmly but fairly by all staff. E-mails from parents that we sampled confirmed that this was the case. The e-mail confirmed that a parent told another prospective parent how well an incident was dealt with by staff. Other examples of how incidents were dealt with appropriately were comments from pupils in questionnaires returned to us -

"I was bullied here but staff really helped me and now I feel happy and safe."
"I feel safe and protected and can rely on someone to help me."

An examination of records on health and safety and committee meeting minutes confirmed the following -

- staff signed to confirm that they had read the health and safety policy,
- there was an audit summary of accidents,
- action was taken to minimise future accidents eg hooks to stop movable steps collapsing,
- audits were in place for fire drills and safety systems eg emergency lighting, fire extinguishers, carbon monoxide detectors, water and pool testing,
- the school had arranged a complete risk assessment of the school's safety systems by an external health and safety company,
- training was in place for maintenance staff,
- risk assessments were updated regularly,
- an action plan was in place to take forward issues raised in the school's satisfactory environmental health report,
- a satisfactory fire risk assessment was completed in November 2012, carried out by an external consultant, which covers all buildings on campus.
- the school's board of governors monitored the school's health and safety, including accidents.

We saw an example of the board of governor's monitoring role in the minutes of their meetings - it was reported to them that a review of child safety around the campus was recently carried out because of darker evenings.

The school had a robust child protection policy in place, which was updated annually. In an example of ideal practice the school's child protection policy had guidance on physical contact between pupils. This was written in simple age-appropriate language. It provided reassurance to pupils about telling staff about any inappropriate touching. Working in this way encourages pupils to be open and to confide in staff about any concerns they may have.

Staff who spoke to us confirmed that training in child protection was carried out annually, during schools Inset days. In an example of first rate practice, the training includes training for visiting music and drama teachers, as well. The gap year students who spoke with us confirmed that they had received ideal child protection training as part of their induction training. One told us that the informal discussion with the Head of Pastoral Care and the Headmaster about child protection scenarios had proved invaluable. The gap year students received child protection training from Scottish Council for Independent Schools (SCIS). They told us that the first rate formal and informal training they had from Ardvreck School enhanced their knowledge of child protection procedures.

The school had a copy of the detailed child protection guidance provided by SCIS. This contained first rate advice and guidance. The Head of Pastoral Care was the school's designated child protection coordinator. In this role, she attended the local authority independent school's meeting about child protection. She told us that networking at this meeting and sharing best practice was invaluable. One result of involvement with this group was an ongoing piece of work on internet safety. Pupils will participate in a pupil self evaluation survey on Internet safety. This will help raise the profile of internet safety.

In conclusion, the school worked hard to ensure the safety of their pupils, whilst allowing them normal childhood freedom to take advantage of the school's first rate grounds and outdoor environment.

Areas for improvement

We found that there were clear maintenance records in place. These were signed off by a member of maintenance staff when each task was completed. As an area for improvement the bursar may wish to consider adding in a record of when each task was completed. Including the date in this makes it easier to audit maintenance records.

The school identified the following area for improvement -

'To strengthen the links between school's matrons/nurses, the community health partnership and the local authority child protection group.'

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.

Service strengths

What we looked at for this Quality statement is reported under Quality statement 1.1. Based on these findings, we gave the school a grade 6 - excellent for the areas we looked at under these Quality statements.

Areas for improvement

These are detailed under Quality statement 1.1.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 3

We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice.

Service strengths

We gave the school a grade 5 - very good, for the areas we looked at under this Quality statement. We concluded this after talking to house staff and gap year students, as well as the Head of Pastoral Care and the Headmaster. We looked at a sample of staff files to confirm that staff were recruited safely, their training opportunities and the level of support from the Headmaster and Head of Pastoral Care.

House staff who spoke with us were motivated and enthusiastic about their job. They were knowledgeable about children's development needs. They told us that they had first rate training opportunities eg courses for boarding staff through the Scottish Council for Independent Schools (SCIS), Ardvreck Inset days, visits to other local independent schools. They confirmed to us that they had completed core training eg child protection training - annually, fire safety training and first aid training.

They said that where they were teachers as well as house staff, pupils see them in different roles, ie as a teacher as well. They told us that the result of this was that it helped pupils' transition to different boarding houses. House staff who spoke with us told us that they 'work well as a team - we are family.'

External and internal training completed by house staff included -

- first aid,
- workshop for boarding staff,
- child protection, SCIS level 4 child protection,
- nurses and matrons spring conference,
- fire marshall training,
- minibus driving,
- self harm,
- GAP seminar - provided by SCIS for gap year students,
- joined up with another school for Positive Interpersonal Relationships training,
- pastoral conference at Uppington School March 2012,
- in-house updates on the management of life long conditions - asthma, diabetes, use of epi pen, management of allergies.

Providing regular opportunities for training in this way was following best practice guidance. It meant that the staff team had ideal opportunities to update their knowledge and skills. Attending external training gave staff the opportunity to share good practice with other house staff.

House staff were either already registered with the General Teaching Council, (GTC), or working toward registration with the Scottish Social Services Council, (SSSC).

We spoke with the gap year students. One of them confirmed that she received a comprehensive induction prior to working with the pupils. She said that further training was provided within her first 3 weeks at Ardvreck. The initial induction was 3 days long. The Head of Pastoral Care confirmed that this meant that she and the Headmaster had an ideal opportunity to get to know the gap year students. The initial induction included both formal and informal training as well as meeting with the housemistress/master whom they would be working with. Topics covered included the school's policies and procedures, school rules and guidelines, child protection (see Quality statement 2.2), medication, fire safety, health and safety and first aid. The gap year students confirmed that they were very well supported by their housemistress/master. Because the gap year students did not start their employment at Ardvreck until the school's 2nd term, it meant that it was easier for them to learn the school systems.

Pupils, even new pupils to the school, were very familiar with the school's routines and this meant that it was easier for the gap year students to learn the school's daily routines.

We found that there was a first rate system in place to provide house staff who were also teachers with formal support. The school had an established continuous professional development system. Staff carried out a self assessment of their duties - this included their boarding duties as well as their teaching duties. House staff who were teachers also had an annual appraisal. This is following best practice guidance. It means that the senior management team of the school can monitor staff performance.

Regular house staff meetings were very well established. These provided staff with an opportunity to raise concerns or issues and to share good practice. Matrons and house staff who were not teachers did not have formal support from their line managers. All staff we spoke to told us that the Head of Pastoral Care and the Headmaster provided a lot of informal support to them. This meant that they had someone they could approach to discuss care practice issues.

The pupils' surveys from Erskine House confirmed that they found staff helpful in a variety of ways. They also wrote about the homely atmosphere in the house -

"When I needed help fitting in all my prep, Mrs Kidd helped me find time."

"Helping unlock my i-Pod and with a problem about a friend."

"They always help with prep or when I lose something they always help me find it."

"Its very homely." "Yes, because when you come hear everyone is so kind that it is like a home." "It is even more friendly than my own house!" "You always stay with your friend and everyone supports you."

and from the questionnaires returned to the Care Inspectorate -

"I feel like I am at home." "I feel safe and protected and can rely on someone to help me."

In conclusion, we found that the boarding house staff teams were highly enthusiastic and motivated about their role. Training opportunities were first rate and included opportunities to share best practice with other professionals. Most staff had regular support meetings and an annual appraisal. Staff who spoke to us clearly had an ideal understanding of the pupils' development needs.

Areas for improvement

We reviewed a sample of staff recruitment files. Almost all of these were satisfactory. However we found that under the previous Headmaster, where staff were promoted internally, the formal process for this was not followed. The current Headmaster told us that the school's recruitment processes were recently reviewed. This meant that any internal promotions would now follow the school's first rate recruitment process, ie it would include an application form, interview, references - including an external one, and where appropriate an update to the candidate's PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Groups) check.

We discussed with the Headmaster and the Head of Pastoral Care further extending the school's professional development and appraisal system to include all staff. We suggested that a formal support meeting, eg held at the end of each half term, would provide all house staff with formal opportunities to discuss their care practice, and raise concerns or issues in a formal setting. Research shows that where such formal systems are in place, it reduces the need for informal support.

The school may wish to consider further development of links between the school's curriculum for excellence and the work of the house staff.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the management and leadership of the service.

Service strengths

What we looked at for this Quality statement is reported under Quality statement 1.1. Based on these findings, we gave the school a grade 6 - excellent for the areas we looked at under these Quality statements.

Areas for improvement

These are detailed under Quality statement 1.1.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 4

We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide

Service strengths

We found that the service was performing very well in the areas we looked at under this Quality statement. We talked to the Headmaster, the Head of Pastoral Care and house staff about the areas we looked under this Quality statement. We looked at associated records eg minutes of Senior Management Team meetings. We gave the school a grade 5 - very good, for the areas we looked at under this Quality statement.

We found that there was a first rate understanding of the need to have a robust quality assurance system in place. Since taking up his appointment at the school, the Headmaster had led the school very well. The school had made a very good start to auditing its strengths and areas for improvement against the quality indicators of How Good Is Our School? (HGIOS) and for the curriculum for excellence. This information informed the school's improvement plan.

Similarly, the Head of Pastoral Care had completed the Self assessment form for the Care Inspectorate and returned it to us timeously. We noted that there was not a co-ordinated approach to the completion of these documents ie the quality assurance systems for education and care were separate.

Both the Headmaster and the Head of Pastoral Care acknowledged that further development of these systems remained ongoing.

Very commendably there were first rate audit systems in place. These covered a wide range of school activities and were co-ordinated by the work of the Health and Safety committee. In an example of best practice, reports on the results of the audits were provided to the Board of Governors. This meant that the board was kept fully informed about developments in the school.

The school had made a start to ensuring that care and education worked together in a whole school approach. Where appropriate, Inset days provided first rate training for teaching and care staff. Matrons were invited to timetabling meetings. This was an example of ideal practice. It meant that Matrons could help to inform timetabling decisions eg with the younger pupils it was important not to overload their school day with too much sport.

Senior Management Team meetings were held every week. These included updates of pastoral care, for each house. This promoted a whole school approach to care and education. The school's ethos clearly underlined this approach -

"We all work better when we are happy, the happiness of Ardvreck children is a tangible, living thing. Happy children invariably succeed." Reference - The Good School's Guide.

In conclusion, the school was ably led by the school's Senior Management Team. The Headmaster had a vision for the school. Since the previous inspection it was clear that significant progress had been made in promoting a whole school approach to school planning. The Senior Management Team had an ideal understanding of the need for robust quality assurance system. A very good start was made in implementing these.

Areas for improvement

The school now needs to further develop the whole school approach to quality assurance. They may wish to consider a joint approach to self assessment, involving both boarding and education staff. This would mean that they would look at the quality indicators for How Good Is Our School, mapped against the Care Inspectorate Quality statements. Working in this way would improve the whole school staff's understanding of the way in which high quality boarding underpins pupils' ability to learn.

The Headmaster and Head of Pastoral Care now need to ensure that the system for recording the purchase, storage, administration and disposal of medication is reviewed in line with best practice guidance - see Area for Improvement under Quality statement 1.3.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

4 Other information

Complaints

No complaints have been upheld, or partially upheld, since the last inspection.

Enforcements

We have taken no enforcement action against this care service since the last inspection.

Additional Information

None noted.

Action Plan

Failure to submit an appropriate action plan within the required timescale, including any agreed extension, where requirements and recommendations have been made, will result in SCSWIS re-grading the Quality Statement within the Management and Leadership Theme as unsatisfactory (1). This will result in the Quality Theme for Management and Leadership being re-graded as Unsatisfactory (1).

5 Summary of grades

Quality of Care and Support - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 3	5 - Very Good
Quality of Environment - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 2	5 - Very Good
Quality of Staffing - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 3	5 - Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 4	5 - Very Good

6 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
3 Dec 2010	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	Not Assessed
		Management and Leadership	Not Assessed
10 Mar 2009	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	Not Assessed
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good
25 Sep 2008	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	5 - Very Good
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good

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