

The New Eccles Hall School

Inspection report for boarding school

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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

New Eccles Hall School is an independent boarding and day school situated in the Norfolk countryside between Norwich and Thetford. The school accepts day pupils from the age of four to 16+. Boarding accommodation is offered to children aged eight years and above. The school has three separate boarding houses. Junior boys are accommodated in the main hall, senior boys in the main school area and girls are accommodated in the converted stable block behind the main hall. There are currently 50 boarders who are accommodated either on a weekly or full boarding basis. Boarders' sleeping areas range from single bedrooms to six-bedded dormitories, depending on children's age. There is communal space in each boarding house and boarders are encouraged to participate in activities across the boarding community. Grassed and hard surface play areas are provided in the extensive grounds which are surrounded by farmland and woodland. The school accepts children of mixed ability, some with specific learning difficulties for whom special education facilities are available. The school also caters for a small number of overseas pupils.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection and all key standards were inspected. A brief tour of the boarding accommodation was also undertaken and led by boarders. Boarders are provided with a good level of personal support and have their views sought and listened to. Staff have access to training opportunities to support them in safeguarding the welfare of boarders. Good management systems are in place to support and review the performance of staff. Positive behaviour is promoted and the use of major punishments is rare. However, the use of one particular house sanction is identified as having a negative impact on other boarders. The health needs of boarders are responded to and there is good support from the school's Doctor. Refurbishment of senior communal areas has recently taken place which has created more socialising opportunities for boarders at evenings and weekends. Some toilet and showering facilities were identified as not providing boarders with adequate levels of privacy. The last inspection asked the school to provide a written induction programme for new staff, brief new staff on child protection procedures and provide detailed job descriptions for all boarding staff. The school was also asked to ensure that all staff involved in boarding duties are appropriately informed of pupils' specific welfare needs.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

New members of staff now experience a formal programme of induction which provides them with a mentor, a child protection briefing and a record of topics covered. Job descriptions are reviewed as staff changes occur. A new job description is in place for boarding house staff. A new system has been developed and fully implemented to record and monitor welfare matters relating to individual pupils. All staff regularly receive refresher child protection briefings. The steps taken in response to the previous recommendations help support the management of staff and help to keep children safe.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The health of boarders is promoted and they receive health care as necessary. Personal, social and health education primarily takes place within the teaching environment of the school. Additional support is available from the school's Matron if required. A good working relationship is reported to exist with the local Doctors' surgery and dispensary. Regular visits are made by the school's Doctor who liaises with other health professionals involved. The school holds a medical history of each pupil. Parental consent to medical treatment and first aid is obtained at the point of admission. Boarders have access to medical, optical and dental services as required. First Aid training is made available to staff and is regularly updated. Records are maintained of accidents, treatment and significant illnesses. Individual records are also kept in relation to the management of pupils' welfare matters. Systems are in place for the safe storage and administering of medication. The systems are currently being reviewed by Matron who is new in post. Advice should be sought regarding the administering of controlled drugs in order to ensure safe practice. Boarders keeping and administering their own medication are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so. Boarders are provided with three hot meals a day with a choice of main dish and a vegetarian option. The school conducts catering surveys to canvass the views of all pupils in relation to the provision of food. Some boarders think that some menus could be improved whilst a number of children referred positively to favourite dishes and the choice on offer.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The school's countering bullying policy is provided to staff, pupils and parents. Pupils have a clear understanding of what they should do if someone is making them unhappy. Bullying and unkindness between pupils is not tolerated and is not identified as a major problem at the school. Boarders identify a wide range of adults within the school whom they would go to with any problems. Year 11 pupils have received guidance on how to refer matters to staff in the event of any incidents coming to their attention. All staff receive child protection training upon joining the school and at regular intervals thereafter. Guidance and procedures are in place to promote and safeguard the welfare of all pupils. Staff are aware of their responsibilities towards the children in their care. The Headmaster has recently attended local child protection training and safer recruitment training. Details of the school's behaviour and discipline policy are made available to staff, pupils and parents. A system of rewards is also in place. Staff promote positive behaviour, tolerance and a sense of right and wrong. Pupils are able to lock personal items away if they wish. Many choose not to as they consider their privacy and belongings are respected. Sanctions are generally considered by pupils to be fair and relevant. However, some junior boys raised the matter of "early bed" and its effectiveness as a repeated sanction for poor behaviour. Other junior boys gave examples of the impact this sanction has on them when their peers are sent to bed early. They found it awkward to spend time in their dormitory and were sometimes woken early in the morning. The school does not have prefects; instead Year 11 pupils take on roles of community responsibility within their boarding house and the wider school. Interactions between senior and junior pupils were observed to be positive and supportive. The school's complaints procedure is provided to parents and pupils. Additional information is also displayed on pupil notice boards. The school reports that no serious complaints have been received since the last inspection. No parent or boarder has contacted Ofsted regarding any concerns. The school encourages pupils and parents to raise any concerns they may have at an early stage. Boarders are familiar with the fire evacuation procedures. Regular fire drills take place in the boarding houses. A fire risk assessment of the school and boarding provision is in place and work has been undertaken in response to this. Firefighting

equipment is regularly serviced and tested together with emergency lighting and fire alarm systems. Fire safety training is provided to staff and professional advice is sought regarding safety issues. House staff are clear on the privacy needs of boarders and, for example, knock on doors and wait for a reply prior to entering. A small number of new junior boys were concerned that staff are around at shower time. This matter was discussed further with staff and other boys in the house. It was made clear that staff are around upstairs supervising at a distance but are not in the shower areas or dormitories at this sensitive time. Staff plan to give further reassurance to all boarders at a house meeting about this matter. Suitable procedures are in place for the recruitment and checking of staff. The selection of records examined evidenced the use of these procedures to check the suitability of newly appointed staff. Gap students are not employed by the school. Steps are taken by the school to verify that taxi drivers engaged by the local authority have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. Outside visitors to the boarding houses are kept under staff supervision to protect children's safety. Wherever possible, maintenance staff will carry out work in the boarding houses during school hours when boarders are not present. Boarders' sleeping areas are for their exclusive use. The communal living areas of the boarding houses are for boarders and for other pupils designated to share these facilities. Security matters are taken seriously by the school. Staff monitor the public use of the swimming pool and the aviation museum on site, and ensure that the school's locking up procedure is followed. Safety glass has been fitted and window restrictors installed where a significant risk has been identified. A system of electrical testing is also in place throughout the school and boarding houses. The school's health and safety policy is regularly reviewed and monitored. All pupils are made aware of health and safety matters affecting them in school and in the boarding houses; such matters include out of bounds areas. A system of risk assessment is in place throughout the school. All risk assessments are regularly reviewed by the health and safety committee.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Personal support for pupils is available from a wide range of staff, including personal tutors and house staff. Pupils are encouraged to share any worries or concerns they may have with a member of staff of their choosing. Pupils know how to contact the school's independent listener. Boarders have access to a range and choice of activities during the evenings and at weekends. Individual hobbies and interests are supported wherever possible. Boarders gave examples of staff encouraging their musical and sporting interests. The school positively promotes the integration of all pupils. Staff are aware of the cultural diversities of its pupils and the difficulties faced by overseas children attending an English school for the first time. The school's learning support department provides one to one assistance to pupils whose first language is not English or who have a specific learning difficulty. Girls, both day and boarding, are few in number which can restrict sporting fixtures with other schools. The school is responding to the desire for more girls' sport and has made links with local schools.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Pupils can contribute their views to the operation of the boarding provision. Formal and informal opportunities are available. These include talking to staff, house meetings and school council meetings. Pupils gave examples of recent changes made in response to their suggestions. These include a wider choice of snacks at supper time, changes to the laundry system and the

refurbishment of communal areas. Telephones are available to pupils in and outside of the boarding accommodation. Pupils may contact family and friends in private at reasonable times without having to seek permission from staff. Incoming calls can also be received during the evening and at weekends. The boarding house office telephone is also made available when necessary. A small number of pupils highlighted recent problems with two of the telephones. These matters are being attended to. Despite these problems, adequate telephones remain available. A number of pupils also use email as a means of keeping in touch with their family and friends. Appropriate helpline numbers are displayed on pupil notice boards. Staff contact parents about their child's progress and any concerns. Parents are also encouraged to contact the school. House staff are available at dropping off and collecting times to talk with parents.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The school has an ongoing programme of refurbishment for its boarding accommodation. A new bathroom is currently being installed in the senior boys' house. Some of the accommodation areas present particular problems due to their age and layout. Refurbishment has recently taken place in some communal areas. An adequate number of toilets, showers and baths is available. However, in two showers and one toilet area discussed with staff, boarders are not afforded an adequate level of privacy. Additional pressure is placed upon other facilities as a result and there is an increase in queuing.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school's statement of principles and practice is contained in the school prospectus. Additional information is provided to parents and pupils in a detailed handbook. Both documents are regularly updated. The Headmaster and designated members of the senior management team have regular oversight of the school's records regarding discipline, complaints, accidents and risk assessments. Boarders are made aware of who is on duty and who is responsible for them at specific times both within the boarding house and at free time. Boarders also have knowledge of where staff sleep at night and they feel able to call upon staff if necessary. A house duty rota is followed in practice. Arrangements for duty cover in times of staff sickness and absence are satisfactory. Training opportunities are provided to all staff, including child protection and wider pastoral care issues. Systems are in place for the annual review and appraisal of staff, and the supervision of ancillary staff. Job descriptions are reviewed as staff changes occur. A new job description is in place for boarding house staff. The school's induction programme allows for staff to be mentored and to discuss school policies and procedures, including child protection matters.

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):

- seek professional advice regarding the administering of controlled drugs (NMS 15)
- examine the use of particular sanctions and their impact on other boarders (NMS 4)
- explain to new boarders the purpose of staff patrolling upstairs at shower and bed time (NMS 37)
- ensure an appropriate level of privacy for boarders in toilets and showers throughout the boarding provision (NMS 44).

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.