

**Ardvreck School
Crieff
Perthshire**

10 December 2002

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. The school	2
3. How effective is pupil care?	4
4. How well is pupil care managed?	8
5. Key strengths	9
6. Main points for action	9
Appendix: Indicators of Quality	11
How can you contact us?	12

**Inspection of
The Care and Welfare of Residential
Pupils
Ardvreck School
Crieff, Perthshire**

1. Introduction

The care and welfare of residential pupils in Ardvreck School was inspected in April and May 2002 as part of a national sample of residential provision. It evaluated the effectiveness of pupil care and how well residential provision was managed.

HM Inspectors interviewed staff and pupils, examined a range of documents, inspected accommodation and facilities, and investigated the school's arrangements for the care and welfare of residential pupils and child protection. They attended meetings concerned with pupils' welfare and a number of extra-curricular activities and events. There was a focus on the pastoral care, support and supervision of pupils. HM Inspectors also assessed the school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning.

Members of the inspection team analysed responses to questionnaires issued to staff and to all residential pupils and their parents. They met the chairman of the Board of Governors and spoke to some parents.

In May 2002 HM Inspectors carried out an inspection of the standards and quality of other key aspects of Ardvreck School. The report on that inspection is published separately at the same time as this report.

2. The school

Ardvreck School is an independent co-educational preparatory school for boarding and day pupils, incorporating pre-preparatory and nursery stages. There were three residences. Boarders aged eight to eleven lived in the main school building. Girls and boys in their final two years lived in modern purpose-built accommodation in the grounds. The main school building also housed the library, the dining room, medical facilities and a number of offices. At the time of the inspection there were 112 boarders.

The care and welfare of residential pupils had previously been inspected in 1997. Main points for action were identified as follows.

- The school should continue to implement plans for the improvement of residential accommodation and facilities, with the junior house as a priority.
- The headmaster should continue to improve systems of management and quality assurance by defining clearly pastoral care remits for staff; producing a policy on staff development and involving house staff systematically in policy making and evaluation.

At the time of the follow-up inspection in 1999 the school had made a number of improvements to the quality of residential accommodation. Remits for pastoral care staff were in place. A good staff development policy was linked to a coherent school development plan and to a clearly defined appraisal process.

Parents' views

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were very positive about the care of pupils.

All felt that:

- staff were approachable and helpful;
- children felt safe and well cared for; and
- residential accommodation and facilities were good.

Most parents felt they could contact their children in private. Most knew how to make complaints or suggestions for improvements. Around a quarter of those responding were dissatisfied with the food provided for children. A similar percentage indicated they did not have a copy of the care and welfare policies of the residence.

Pupils' views

Almost all pupils responded to the questionnaire.

Almost all felt that:

- their house was a good place to live and they were safe and well cared for;
- new pupils were given a good welcome and helpful advice;
- there were clear guidelines about behaviour when they were out of their house; and
- it was a friendly school and most pupils related well to one another.

While the majority felt that they could make and receive telephone calls in private and had a say in how their house was organised, only a quarter of the senior girls expressed these views. Fewer than half the pupils felt the quality and choice of meals was good. Fewer than half of the junior pupils felt that toilet facilities were good and that their privacy was respected when washing, showering or changing.

Staff views

Overall, staff were very positive in their views of the school. Almost all thought that care was good and that they knew boarders well. They thought that there was an appropriate range of well-organised leisure activities. Seventy percent of staff agreed that they had good access to staff development and training.

3. How effective is pupil care?

Ethos

The ethos in the residences was good. Relationships between pupils and staff were sometimes variable but generally open and positive. Pupils were well behaved, and courteous to visitors. Mealtimes were sociable occasions. Pupils had very good opportunities to take part in a wide range of evening and weekend activities. Overall, there was a strong sense of community. Boarders had some appropriate house responsibilities. They had insufficient privacy when phoning or writing home. They had no formal opportunities to express their views about their care and welfare. The school did not have a pupils' council, suggestion box, or food committee. Assemblies were used well for addressing religious, social and moral issues, and celebrating pupils' achievements.

Partnership with parents

Partnership with parents was good. The school and parents could contact each other by telephone, letter or e-mail as required. Staff responded promptly to any queries or concerns. Sporting and social events provided good opportunities for parents to visit and meet with staff. Parents received informative newsletters and termly reports about residential issues. Staff and pupils had compiled and published a high quality magazine which detailed the highlights of the previous year. The parents of new pupils were given a report by telephone shortly after their children had joined the school. Each residence had compiled a draft handbook. Parents were not given sufficiently detailed written information about

boarding policies and procedures. The Board of Governors provided active support, particularly in planning for the upkeep and maintenance of the school. Parents were well represented on the Board.

Accommodation

Accommodation and facilities were good overall. The quality of accommodation in the older pupils' houses was generally very good, with comfortable common rooms. However, accommodation for junior pupils had some weaknesses. The common room was small and there was a lack of privacy for using the telephone. Most pupils had sufficient space which they were able to personalise, but some junior dormitories were cramped. Although washing and showering facilities were generally good, the showers for boys lacked privacy. There were insufficient toilets in the junior house. A good system was in place to ensure that minor faults in the accommodation were fixed quickly. Although the school had recently introduced signing in procedures for visitors, it needed to improve security further.

Resources

The resources for boarders were good. Pupils had access to a good range of books, toys and games. They had access to computers for study and leisure. However, there was no control on access to the internet other than the presence of a member of staff. Staff made very good use of the large gymnasium, swimming pool, outdoor sports areas and the school grounds to organise regular physical activities. The school had modern minibuses appropriately fitted with passenger seatbelts. The headteacher allocated budgets for repairs and maintenance appropriately. These included allocations for furniture, fittings and leisure resources.

Staffing

The school was very well staffed. Residential staff had a good range of experience and all had undergone security checks before appointment. Although they did not have clear written remits, they were well deployed to provide care for the pupils. Three overseas students were employed on a temporary basis and had some

responsibilities for residential care. Ancillary staff made a strong contribution to the life of the school.

Care of pupils

In inspecting the care of pupils, HM Inspectors took account of arrangements for pupils' safety, health, academic and spiritual needs. Overall, they found that these arrangements had a number of strengths, but also some important weaknesses.

Staff were very committed to the care and welfare of the pupils. Access to medical care was very good. Boarders who were unwell were looked after by experienced nursing staff. General practitioners from the local health centre conducted regular surgeries. There were appropriate arrangements for issuing medicines and keeping medical records. Electrical equipment was regularly checked.

Staff encouraged pupils in healthy eating. The quality of catering was generally good. Fruit and salads were available at every main meal. The school needed to review the amount and kinds of food offered at the mid-day and evening meals. Pupils were encouraged to take regular exercise through participating in a wide range of sporting activities. The very good programme of outdoor pursuits included ski-ing and hill-walking. Pupils had very good opportunities to play outside in the spacious school grounds. However, arrangements to reinforce the importance of a healthy lifestyle varied from house to house.

Study arrangements for boarders were very good. Staff supervised prep and gave help as needed.

Much of the pastoral care in the school was of a high quality. Nevertheless, it had some important weaknesses, because insufficient attention had been paid to a variety of areas where safeguards are necessary. At the beginning of the inspection there was no child protection policy in place, although one was introduced at the end of

the inspection. Staff had not received recent training in child protection, and were unclear as to the identity of the child protection co-ordinator. The school did not have a clear written anti-bullying policy or procedures for responding to any incidents of bullying, for example inappropriate name-calling. While staff generally dealt effectively with the very few incidents that occurred, they did not have clear guidance on how to respond and record the action taken. Accordingly, there was some inconsistency in how incidents were dealt with. Childline notices had recently been displayed beside the telephones, but pupils did not have enough information on whom to approach for help and advice. Pupils had a general awareness of what was expected of them. However, they had no clear and consistent guidance on rules, expected behaviour, rewards or sanctions. Although arrangements for the supervision of pupils were generally good, there were no consistent procedures for pupils to sign in and out when moving between houses. Fire drills were held regularly, but they were not systematically recorded. A policy on health and safety was in preparation.

Support for pupils

Support for pupils was generally good. Staff liaised informally to provide effective support to pupils who required extra help in their learning. A wide range of sporting fixtures, cultural activities and excursions helped to widen pupils' experience and develop self-confidence. Pupils were encouraged to be mindful of others through supporting local charities. Older pupils had good opportunities to take responsibility by undertaking routine tasks in their houses and by acting as prefects. They did not have sufficient formal opportunities to contribute to the running of the houses through, for example, house committees.

4. How well is pupil care managed?

Staff management and leadership

The headmaster, who took up his post in January 2000, was highly committed to the school and very hard-working. Significant effort had been devoted to the remit from the Board of Governors to restore viability to the school, with considerable success. The number of boarders had increased by a quarter, and the financial position had been strengthened. Very good relationships had been established with staff, pupils and parents. He had revised financial procedures and set the school on a more secure financial footing. Some important aspects of the accommodation had been improved. It was now time to put in place clearer management to ensure that stronger quality assurance, improved arrangements for pastoral care and more effective staff development contributed to further improvement of residential provision for pupils.

Senior staff in charge of the houses had worked out remits for themselves. Other boarding staff were clear about their duties but did not have written remits. The headmaster's wife and the team of matrons carried out their duties very effectively. Although the headmaster had held discussions with all staff about their work in the previous session, the school had no clear arrangements for staff development and review. The information from these discussions had not been used to identify staff development needs. Staff had not received recent training in child protection. Some staff were undertaking further training on running a boarding house.

Aims and policy making

The school's mission statement provided a broad overview of the experience the school offered. It did not provide a sharply focused set of aims against which to evaluate the work of the school. There was a need to consider how to involve the whole school community in the revision and preparation of aims, rules, procedures and key policies.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance procedures had major weaknesses. The headmaster discussed aspects of the boarding provision with care staff but did not make regular visits to the boarding houses. There was no systematic monitoring and evaluation of the quality of residential provision.

Development Planning

A whole school analysis of strengths and weaknesses had been undertaken and staff views sought in 2000. While weaknesses had been identified, no action taken had been recorded. There was no development plan. Although the headmaster had requested senior staff to provide lists of their priorities by November 2001, these lists had not been discussed or prioritised.

5. Key strengths

- Confident, polite and well-behaved pupils who supported each other well.
- Caring and committed residential staff.
- The school's sports hall and outdoor facilities.
- A wide range of sporting and extra-curricular activities.
- The provision of staff in the boarding houses.

6. Main points for action

The school and Board of Governors should act on the following recommendations.

- A clear staff management and development framework should be established for the residences. It should include a development plan, and

arrangements for monitoring and evaluating provision and for staff development and review.

- All policies, procedures and information relevant to the care and welfare of boarders, together with procedures for making complaints, should be clarified and made available to staff, pupils and parents.
- Pupils should be provided with better opportunities to express their views about life in the boarding houses.
- The issues identified in this report concerning accommodation in the junior house and pupils' privacy and security should be addressed.
- All staff should receive training in child protection.

HM Inspectors will return between one and two years after the publication of this report to assess progress in meeting these recommendations.

Duncan MacQuarrie
HM Inspector
on behalf of HM Chief Inspector
Independent Schools

10 December 2002

See Performance Indicator data overleaf.

Appendix

Indicators of quality

We judged the following to be *very good*

- Provision of staff

We judged the following to be *good*

- The school's ethos
- Partnership with parents and the Board of Governors
- Provision of accommodation and facilities
- Provision of resources
- Organisation and use of resources and space
- Links with other schools, agencies, employers and the community
- Personal and social development
- Effectiveness of leadership
- Effectiveness of promoted staff

We judged the following to be *fair*

- Effectiveness and deployment of staff
- Pastoral care
- Staff development and review

We judged the following to be *unsatisfactory*

- Self-evaluation
- The development plan
- Implementing the development plan

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headmaster and school staff, the Board of Governors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from the office at the address below or by telephoning 0131 244 2898. Copies are also available on our web site: www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to Dr Gill Robinson, HMCI whose address is given below. If you are still dissatisfied with our services, you can contact your member of the Scottish Parliament (or, if you prefer, any other MSP) and ask for your complaint to be passed to the Scottish Parliamentary Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government Departments and Agencies. He will not normally consider your complaint before the HMIE complaints procedure has been used. Instead, he will usually ask you to give us the chance to put matters right first if we can.

HM Inspectorate of Education
Eastern Division
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
EDINBURGH
EH11 3XD

Crown Copyright 2002

HM Inspectorate of Education

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.