
Inspection of the Care and Welfare of Residential Pupils

Loretto School

Musselburgh

1. Introduction

Loretto School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged from 8-18. The school is located in Musselburgh, East Lothian. The Junior School (Loretto Nippers) provides for pupils aged 8 - 13. The Senior School provides for pupils aged 14-18. At the time of the inspection, there were 45 boarders in the Junior School, of whom 12 were girls. There were 265 boarders in the Senior School of whom 98 were girls.

The inspection took place in February and March 1999 as part of a national sample of residential provision. It evaluated the quality of resources provided, how well pupils were cared for, the support provided for their learning and development, and how well residential provision was managed.

HM Inspectors surveyed the views of staff and pupils and interviewed a sample of both. They attended meetings concerned with pupils' welfare and a number of extra-curricular activities. They analysed a range of documents including the school development plan, the child protection policy and the complaints logbooks. They inspected accommodation and facilities and

investigated the school's arrangements for ensuring the welfare of residential pupils by day and night. There was a focus on the pastoral care, support and supervision of pupils.

The results of a questionnaire sent to all parents of boarders, were taken into account during the inspection. Members of the inspection team also met a representative of the Governors.

2. How good is pupil-care?

Views of parents, pupils and staff

Most boarders were satisfied with the quality of pastoral care within the school. They felt that:

- they were safe and well cared for;
- staff knew them well and would help them;
- complaints procedures were clear; and
- guidelines for behaviour were fair.

The majority of the boarders were dissatisfied with:

- the adequacy of toilets, baths and showers;
- the quality of meals; and
- the security of personal belongings.

Over a third of the boarders expressed concern about the quality of sleeping accommodation, the quality of care when ill, and the lack of weekend activities and adequate facilities for games, hobbies and interests.

Virtually all staff with responsibility for boarders felt that they had clear remits, that procedures for care and welfare of boarders were well defined and that they had suitable opportunities for staff development.

Most parents who responded to the questionnaire were very satisfied with provision, including overall care for pupils and communication with staff. Some expressed concern at the quality of the food and felt they needed more information about the care and welfare policies of the school.

Ethos

Overall the ethos of the school was pleasant and welcoming. Relationships between staff and pupils were positive.

Relationships between most pupils were good. Commendably, the headmaster and house staff were taking steps to stamp out the practice of "scabbing", or the inappropriate exercise of influence by older boys over younger boys. However in some areas of school life, and in some houses in

the Senior School, vestiges of the practice persisted. Continued vigilance was needed to ensure that the school's policy was fully implemented and was understood by all older boys. Generally pupils were well behaved and courteous. There was a good sense of identity and community spirit in almost all the houses. A number of boys in the Senior School houses, however, showed little regard for the care of the accommodation and facilities.

Partnership with parents

The school provided a wide range of information to parents. Arrangements for communicating with parents were very good and included:

- termly written reports;
- regular telephone, e-mail or fax reports from tutors;
- regular newsletters; and
- the termly Loretto Family Forum.

Meetings for parents included open days during term time. The school generally responded thoroughly to parental enquiries and concerns, although it should improve its procedures for recording complaints and noting the courses of action taken.

Accommodation

The quality of accommodation for boarders was variable and had a number of significant weaknesses. Junior School facilities were good and provided a welcoming and homely atmosphere for

younger boarders. In the Senior School, boys' accommodation ranged from unsatisfactory to fair, while girls' accommodation ranged from good to very good. Dormitory facilities for boys from the Third Form to the Fifth Form were just adequate. Older pupils had suitable individual or twin study rooms. Shower, bath and toilet facilities were unsatisfactory in a number of houses. As a matter of urgency the school should ensure that better provision, with suitable levels of personal privacy, is available to all pupils. Levels of heating in Senior School houses were erratic. The condition of some furniture was unsatisfactory. Although facilities for personal study were generally good, social areas in boys' houses in the Senior School were bleak and lacked homeliness. Commendably, the school had developed other social areas for Fifth and Sixth Forms and was planning a social area for Third and Fourth Forms and a refurbishment of some social areas in boys' houses. Snack-making facilities were available in each house, although the hygiene of these facilities in some houses required to be improved.

Better security arrangements were required in some areas of the school, including entry controls and arrangements for the identification of visitors.

Sanatorium facilities were inadequate and were under review. There was a lack of suitable privacy for medical consultation.

A range of other health and safety issues was brought to the attention of the school.

Resources

Resources for the care and welfare of residential pupils were fair overall. Housemasters and housemistresses were given small budgets for renewable items. However, the school should seek to involve house staff more fully in determining priorities for the refurbishment and resourcing of houses, in the light of modern standards of child care.

Telephones were available in each house, although some lacked adequate privacy. Childline posters were displayed at most telephones. Noticeboards in each house gave clear details of house activities, child protection and safety arrangements. Displays of pupils' work enhanced the environment and sense of house identity in some, but not all, houses. Pupils were able to personalise their own study bedrooms, but some dormitories were drab.

In almost all houses, pupils had appropriate access to television, video and newspapers, but the provision of books and games was limited. Pupils also had access to an excellent Communication and Resource Centre (CRC), all-weather pitches and other games facilities. Good use was made of other local community resources. The school had three modern minibuses fitted with seatbelts.

Staffing

The houses were well staffed by suitably experienced and qualified staff. Housemasters and housemistresses, their assistants and matrons were supported by

teams of house tutors who met weekly with individual pupils to monitor pastoral and academic progress. Staff were well deployed to ensure the effective care of the pupils. The practice of regular house team meetings should be implemented more consistently across the school. Pupils had access to appropriate medical and nursing staff and to an independent counsellor. The school chaplain visited houses regularly.

All staff had remits with clearly defined individual responsibilities. Appropriate arrangements were in place for appointing staff, although retrospective vetting of some staff was required.

The school had an extensive range of contacts with external agencies which provided support for:

- the personal and social education programme; and
- the range of extra-curricular activities.

Care of pupils

Pastoral care for pupils was very good overall. Virtually all pupils interviewed felt safe and well cared for. House staff were perceived to be open, accessible and interested in their welfare. The school had produced clear child protection guidelines. Advice to pupils on child protection issues, complaints procedures and on the school's "listening policy" was clearly displayed in the Senior School. Pupils were aware that there were a number of adults to whom they could turn in case of difficulty. The headmaster's "open door" surgeries

provided further opportunities for pupils to raise concerns with him directly. The school had a clear and well defined anti-bullying policy and all incidents were recorded centrally. Pupils were clear about what to do in the case of bullying. School rules were perceived to be fair, although some older pupils felt them to be unduly strict. Arrangements for signing in and out of houses, for visits outwith the school, and for allowing visitors to houses were suitable in principle, although the policy should be applied more consistently across houses. The system of rewarding positive behaviour and achievement was well defined. There were clear guidelines for dealing with serious matters related to theft, alcohol or the misuse of drugs. Significant breaches of school discipline were dealt with effectively. There were regular fire drills, although these were not always recorded. Pupils' own electrical equipment was not checked on a regular enough basis.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme was well designed overall and provided good attention to key aspects of health education. There were clear policies with regard to personal safety, substance abuse and other aspects of health education. Commendably, the emphasis was on promoting positive behaviour.

The school steward was making significant efforts to improve the balance and quality of pupils' diet in the light of a consultant's review. Procedures included discussion with pupils' representatives. Continued

efforts were needed to monitor and improve the diet of pupils, particularly in the Junior School.

The school code of medical practice was suitable but was not held by all members of staff with a relevant role in the care of pupils. Procedures for issuing medicines were appropriate. Pupils medical records were kept securely.

There were good arrangements for supporting prep and study, particularly in the new Communication and Resource Centre. Supervision levels for prep in the Junior School should be reviewed. Plans were well advanced for the introduction of ICT facilities in individual houses.

Chapel services provided regular opportunities for religious observance and spiritual development and were an important part of the ethos of the school.

Support for pupils

The school had a well organised system of house tutors, which included senior promoted staff. The support provided by tutors was generally good, and was appreciated by pupils. The school chaplain provided excellent support for pupils and staff throughout the school. More consistency was needed in the monitoring of academic progress and personal development, however. Self assessment and target setting was carried out on a termly basis in most houses. Induction arrangements for new pupils needed to be more common across houses. A “shadow” system had been introduced by which new

pupils were supported by an older pupil. However, closer monitoring of the effectiveness of this system was required.

The range of whole school extra-curricular activities, including weekend activities, was designed to provide personal and social development and included team sports, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and community service. Team sports and the CCF were unpopular with a significant number of pupils. The school had accepted the need to develop a wider range of cultural and aesthetic pursuits, and more options for health and fitness related physical activities outwith team games, to meet the needs of pupils in the Senior School more fully.

There were some suitable ways in which individual pupils could have responsibilities within houses, including some supervisory roles in dormitories for older pupils. Prefects within houses exercised a valuable role in monitoring the welfare of pupils. However, the lack of house committees in some houses limited the opportunities through which pupils of all ages might channel their views on care and welfare issues.

3. How well is pupil care managed?

Staff management and leadership

The headmaster had provided very good leadership in developing an appropriate care and welfare ethos and in managing the introduction of full co-educational provision. He had clear and appropriate

priorities for the further development of care and welfare throughout the school.

He was well supported by senior promoted staff, including the vicegerent (deputy headmaster), the child protection and PSHE co-ordinator and the senior housemistress. The head of the Junior School provided very good leadership in establishing a positive and caring ethos for boarders and developing good teamwork among staff, in the Junior School.

Housemasters and housemistresses showed a high degree of commitment to the welfare of residential pupils and provided good or very good leadership in most houses.

There had been sustained attention to care and welfare issues in the programme of staff development, particularly issues related to child protection and health education. The programme had been organised effectively by the child protection and PSHE co-ordinator. A more systematic policy of staff development, linked to priorities identified in the school development plan, was now needed. In particular, more effective staff development for matrons related to the care and welfare of boarders was required.

Aims and policy making

The aims of the school were clearly set out in the prospectus and pupils' diary and in the school development plan. The aims emphasised appropriately the development of the whole person: mind, body and spirit. Some houses had well designed house handbooks for pupils, which set out the

aims of the house and the procedures to be followed. Other houses did not have their practices set out clearly enough.

There were good whole school policies for child protection, most aspects of health education, equal opportunities and anti-bullying. These were familiar to staff involved in the care and welfare of residential pupils. The weekly meetings of housemasters and housemistresses were beginning to develop more consistency of policy in residential care across the school.

Quality assurance

Commendably the school had carried out surveys of pupils', staff and parents' views about the quality of care for residential pupils. In addition the school had also used a range of external consultants to audit aspects of various provision, including:

- a health and safety audit;
- a communications audit; and
- a systematic review of the diet provided.

Not all aspects of these reviews had yet been fully implemented, however. Commendably the senior housemistress was now engaged on a audit of gender equality as part of the development of co-educational provision.

The school had a very well established system of staff appraisal which included all aspects of individual responsibility for the care and welfare of boarders. However,

more systematic evaluation was needed by house staff of care and welfare provision, against agreed performance indicators.

The senior management team needed to increase the monitoring of care and welfare policies and provision across the school, to ensure consistency of quality and the application of agreed policies and procedures across the school.

Development Planning

The development plan for the school was well structured and related suitably, within the range of whole school priorities, to the overall care and welfare of residential pupils. Not all care staff were fully aware of the development plan, however, and lacked a sense of ownership of the plan. More systematic development planning for the care and welfare of residential pupils should include house staff, the bursar and other relevant senior staff. Planning should address resource and maintenance issues, staff development and management priorities. A review of all aspects of medical provision was needed to address the concerns of pupils.

4. Key strengths of pupil-care

The key strengths of the provision for boarders included:

- clear leadership by the headmaster and good support from other senior staff, including the head of the Junior School, in setting the tone for the care and welfare of boarders;

- regular communication with parents on the progress of individual pupils;
- high levels of commitment shown by housemasters, housemistresses, and other house staff;
- good knowledge of individual pupils by house staff;
- clear policies on child protection, health education, equal opportunities and anti-bullying; and
- good community spirit and a strong sense of identity amongst staff and pupils.

5. Main Points for Action

The school and Board of Governors should act on the following recommendations which relate to provision for the care and welfare of residential pupils:

- The accommodation, health and safety issues raised in the report, and discussed with the school, should be addressed.
- The school should develop agreed care and welfare policies, and more consistent forms of record keeping, to be applied in every house.
- The school should introduce more systematic quality assurance

procedures, including the monitoring of care and welfare policies and practices by senior promoted staff.

- There should be self-evaluation using the published performance indicators in *Improving the Care and Welfare of Residential Pupils (SOEID, 1998)*.
- The school should review its arrangements for the medical care of pupils.
- The school should develop a more systematic approach to staff development related to care and welfare issues for all staff, including non-teaching staff, as part of the development planning process.

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

Copies of this report have been sent to the headmaster, the Board of Governors, school staff and Member of Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from the office at the address below.

If you want to make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report, you should write in the first instance to the HM Chief Inspector whose address is given below. If you are unhappy with the response, you will be told in writing what further steps you may take.

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Appendix

HM Inspectors use indicators of quality when making judgements about the work of a school. These indicators have been published so that schools can use them to evaluate their own work.

This appendix summarises some of the findings contained in this report about the effectiveness of the care and welfare for residential pupils and how well it is managed.

very good major strengths

good more strengths than weaknesses

fair some important weaknesses

unsatisfactory major weaknesses

These evaluations refer specifically to arrangements for the Care and Welfare of Residential Pupils

We judged the following to be *very good*

- Partnership with parents, the Board of Governors
- Provision of staff
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff for residential pupils' care and welfare
- Links with other schools, agencies, employers and the community
- Pastoral care for residential pupils
- Effectiveness of the leadership of residential care and welfare

We judged the following to be *good*

- The school's ethos
- Provision for the personal and social development of residential pupils
- The school's arrangements for development and review of staff responsible for care and welfare of residential pupils
- The school's approach to evaluating residential provision
- The development plan for residential provision
- Implementing planned developments for residential provision

We judged the following to be *fair*

- Residential accommodation
- Provision of resources for residences
- The organisation and use of accommodation and resources for residential pupils' care and welfare

We judged the following to be *unsatisfactory*

- No aspects were found to be in this category