

**Loretto School
Musselburgh
31 October 2006**

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1. Background

The inspection of Loretto School took place in June 2006 as part of a programme of integrated inspections of mainstream school care accommodation services by the Care Commission and HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). It follows from the commencement of integrated inspection under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act, 2001 on 1 April 2005. This report has been prepared and published jointly by the Care Commission and HMIE.

The inspection covered key aspects of the school's residential provision, including the environment for care, support for pupils, processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. Members of the inspection team interviewed teachers, care staff, and groups of pupils. They analysed responses to questionnaires issued to pupils, their parents or carers, and care and teaching staff. They also met the chairman of the Board of Governors.

Loretto School is an independent school which provides boarding accommodation for pupils aged 8 to 18. It is located in Musselburgh. At the time of the inspection, there were 471 pupils on the roll, of whom 210 were boarders. The agreed maximum roll for boarding was 253.

2. Key strengths

The inspection team identified the following key strengths.

- Hard working, committed staff and confident, polite and very well behaved pupils.
- Very good pastoral care.
- The successful encouragement and support for pupils' personal and social development.
- The very good leadership provided by the headmaster and the very effective contribution of the senior management team and senior house staff to ensuring high quality boarding provision.

3. What are the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff?

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were very pleased with the provision for boarding and would recommend the school to other parents. Almost all thought that pupils felt safe and well cared for, and they believed they got regular, accurate and helpful reports about their child's welfare and development. Overall, pupils were happy with their boarding experiences. Almost all thought that their boarding house was a good place to live in and they got on well with each other. Around a third of pupils felt toilet and showering facilities were poor and that their personal belongings were not safe in the house. Around a fifth of them felt there was too little to do in the evenings and at the weekends. Staff expressed very positive views about almost all aspects of the houses and the care provided for pupils. Further details about what most pleased parents and carers, staff and pupils and what they would most like to see improved can be found in Appendix 3 of this report.

4. How good is the environment for care?

Climate and relationships

Climate and relationships between pupils and staff were very good. Pupils and staff had a strong sense of community and each house had a warm and friendly atmosphere. Pupils and staff related very well to each other across the houses. They were very proud of their school and their morale was high. This was particularly true in the junior boarding house. Almost all pupils were courteous and very well behaved. Rules and guidelines focused appropriately on respecting others and keeping pupils safe. Pupils could express their views about life in the houses through house councils and the Pupil Council. However, these councils met infrequently and pupils did not always receive feedback on their discussions.

Relationships with parents were very good. Parents were issued with an informative handbook. Staff responded quickly and effectively to any concerns raised by parents and kept them well informed of any matters relating to their children's health and welfare. Whilst reports to parents were detailed and helpful, these were not issued in any language other than English. Staff made very good efforts to involve parents in the life of the residence and invited them to attend meetings, social events and school shows.

Comfort, safety and security

Accommodation and facilities throughout the six houses were homely and comfortable overall. However, two houses were in need of redecoration. In some houses, pupils had very good sleeping arrangements. In these houses, all pupils in Upper Sixth form had their own study bedrooms and lower forms were accommodated comfortably in shared study bedrooms and dormitories. However, in other houses, sleeping and washing facilities varied in quality from very good to fair. Pupils were encouraged to personalise their own rooms but were not consulted regarding the decoration of communal areas. They were provided with lockable storage in the bedrooms and dormitories. However, in some houses this was limited in space. In some houses, the water pressure was insufficient and, as a result, there were problems meeting the demand for hot showers at peak times. Dining arrangements were very good. The school had very good facilities for leisure pursuits which included a swimming pool, a theatre, music rooms and a library. Outdoor recreational facilities were extensive and included pitches for cricket, rugby, football, lacrosse, tennis and hockey. Pupils were encouraged to make use of local amenities if the school did not provide for their interests. All houses were well equipped with television and games areas and pupils were able to use kitchens to prepare snacks and hot drinks. All houses had computers with internet links. All were suitably screened to stop access to inappropriate sites.

The houses had secure, coded entry systems. Specific issues about security were raised with the headmaster. Each house had arrangements in place for pupils to sign in and out to show their whereabouts in the evenings and at weekends. However, not all pupils adhered to these arrangements. Procedures for booking flexi boarders into houses were not sufficiently clear, leading to inaccurate recording at times. Arrangements for the monitoring of pupils in houses during the day were not consistent across houses. Staff carried out regular fire drills and were improving the recording of these and the weekly fire alarm tests. Not all of the recommendations made by the Lothian and Borders Fire Officers had been addressed. Appropriate safety checks had been carried out on electrical equipment, including pupils' personal items. A comprehensive

system was in place to ensure relevant maintenance checks were carried out. Risk assessments had been undertaken in some houses, and for some outings, but not consistently across the range of boarding provision.

5. How well are pupils supported?

Pastoral care

The quality of pastoral care was very good. Staff were deployed appropriately to ensure a rota of staff on duty each evening. House staff were approachable and very responsive to the welfare needs of the pupils. New pupils were made to feel welcome by other boarders. New boarders in the junior house were monitored closely by staff to ensure that they settled well. The spiritual and religious needs of pupils were very well met. The school accommodated pupils from a wide range of countries and had appropriate arrangements to meet the needs of those from other faith groups. Throughout the year, houses celebrated different cultural festivals.

The matrons and school nurses ensured that the medical needs of the pupils were being met effectively at all times. All pupils were registered with the local medical practice and the practice doctor held a regular surgery at the school. The matrons were well supported by the school nurses and had ensured that good systems of communication were in place between the boarding houses, nurses and parents on pupils' medical needs and treatments. The school provided pupils with a varied and balanced diet, with a good range of choices at all mealtimes. Specific dietary requirements were well met.

The school had an appropriate child protection policy and generally implemented it well. However a few members of staff were not fully confident with its procedures. Pupils had received relevant information relating to child protection and ChildLine posters were displayed prominently throughout the boarding houses. The school had an appropriate anti-bullying policy and staff had dealt effectively with the few instances of bullying. Staff were clear about procedures they would follow should a pupil go missing. However, there was no written guidance regarding this.

Pupils agreed that the rules were clear and sensible. They and their parents were provided with informative house handbooks. The school had a clear complaints policy which was available to all parents and pupils. Complaints were recorded and responded to appropriately. The complaints procedure did not include contact details for the Care Commission.

Under the requirements of the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Records) (Scotland) Act, the school had submitted its policy on disability and discrimination to the Scottish Executive. The policy included the school's detailed review of its approaches to improving accessibility.

Supporting pupils' education

Academic and boarding staff monitored pupils' academic and personal progress closely. Well-established links between academic and boarding staff ensured that relevant information was shared effectively. In the best practice, tutors, assigned to small groups of pupils to support and monitor their progress, met weekly with individual pupils within their groups and knew their pupils very well. The school had clear plans to ensure this good practice was implemented

consistently. Boarders were provided with clear guidelines for times when 'prep' and study was to be undertaken. Boarders made generally good use of very good facilities for study. Library and resource centre staff provided additional support materials for study, and boarders had appropriate access to the school information and communications technology network via computers in their houses. However, supervision of 'prep' across the boarding houses was variable. The study club, to which pupils were referred or could self-refer, provided an effective method of support for boarders and day pupils who required additional supervised study time. The support for learning department very effectively identified, supported and monitored the progress of pupils with additional support needs. The department shared well-designed, individualised pupil profiles with boarding staff, boarders, day pupils and their parents. Pupils with English as an additional language received very good specialist tuition. However, they would benefit from an induction pack and the option of receiving progress reports in their own language.

Personal and social development

The school's provision for personal and social development was very good. Its programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) covered appropriate aspects, including healthy living, moral issues and careers. Visitors gave informative talks on a range of interesting topics. Aspects of the PSHE programme, such as promoting healthy eating, and developing personal responsibility were reinforced appropriately in the boarding houses. Some house staff had organised imaginative house activities which had helped pupils to learn more about issues such as relationships and diversity. Pupils took part in a wide range of activities in school and within the community to help them take responsibility and develop their citizenship skills, including older pupils being prefects. However, pupils did not always have sufficient opportunities to prepare for independent life after school, through, for example, taking responsibility for washing up, cooking or budgeting.

Boarders participated in a wide range of activities designed to develop their personal and social skills and to encourage their broad achievements. All in the fourth form, for example, benefited from varied activities through their participation in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) which built teamwork and a sense of responsibility. Almost all boarders and day pupils enthusiastically chose activities, for instance, playing in the pipe band and participating in team sports. Many pupils took part successfully in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, in Youth Enterprise schemes and charity work. At weekends, pupils benefited from a well-structured leisure programme, although a substantial number of pupils indicated they would prefer to have more time to themselves.

6. Improving the residential provision

The headmaster provided very good leadership. He was very knowledgeable about current best practice in the care and welfare of boarders and had clearly identified for staff the future direction of boarding at Loretto. He had successfully refined the arrangements for house staff meetings and encouraged open discussions with a strong emphasis on ensuring collective involvement in decision making. The senior management team provided the headmaster with very good support, and all were strongly committed to moving residential care forward. Housemasters and housemistresses led and managed their houses very well. They were hardworking and strongly committed to the care and welfare of boarders. They had a good range of experience and the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake their roles and provide effective care for residential

pupils. Domestic matrons' contact with pupils varied between houses, with some having more direct input into care than others.

Staff remits were clear and appropriate. All staff had undertaken formal reviews. Their training needs relating to care and welfare had been identified and were being addressed. The school had a comprehensive and clearly set out range of policies for the care and welfare of pupils. A policy on dealing with missing pupils was now needed.

The school's arrangements for self-evaluation were good overall. The headmaster, working closely with his management team had developed a range of useful approaches to evaluating and monitoring the quality of the work of the houses. They had made effective use of national quality indicators and care standards to review the provision of residential care within each house. Arrangements for Disclosure Scotland checks were being reviewed to ensure they were carried out promptly. The Board of Governors provided useful support to the school and met regularly with the headmaster to discuss issues relating to the care and welfare of residential pupils.

Main points for action

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

- Address the weaknesses in accommodation and improve the security arrangements identified in this report.
- Involve pupils more in making decisions about their boarding provision and experiences.
- Implement a policy for missing pupils and ensure risk assessments are undertaken for all relevant facilities and events.

Requirements

The school must ensure that the recommendations made in the Lothian and Borders Fire Officers' reports are addressed as a matter of priority.

This is in order to comply with:

SSI 2002/114 Regulation 4(1)(a) - a requirement to ensure that providers shall make proper provision for the health and welfare of service users.

What happens next?

As a result of the strengths in the performance and management of the school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. The school and the Board of Governors have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. Within two years of the publication of this report, the Board of Governors, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents and carers.

Following this inspection, Care Commission Officers will commence statutory twice yearly inspections of the school.

David M Martin
HM Inspector

Trudi Reid
Care Commission Officer

31 October 2006

Appendix 1 Summary information

In conducting this inspection the team took account of the following HMIE quality indicators in *How good is our school?* and *National Care Standards*.

How good is the environment for care?	
QI 5.1	Climate and relationships
Standard 5	Comfort, safety and security
How well are pupils supported?	
QI 4.1	Pastoral care
Standard 3	Care and protection
Standard 17	Concerns, comments and complaints
Standard 14	Supporting your education
QI 4.2	Personal and social development
Improving the residential provision	
QI 7.4	Leadership
Standard 7	Management and staffing
QI 7.2	Self-evaluation

Evaluations made using HMIE quality indicators use the following scale to describe the team's judgements:

Very good	:	major strengths
Good	:	strengths outweigh weaknesses
Fair	:	some important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory	:	major weaknesses

Reports contain recommendations which are intended to support improvements in the quality of service.

Any requirements refer to actions which must be taken by service providers to ensure that regulations are met and there is compliance with relevant legislation. In these cases, the regulation(s) to which requirements refer will be notified clearly and timescales given.

Appendix 2 Quality indicator summary table

How good is our school? Quality Indicator	Evaluation
Climate and relationships	Very Good
Pastoral care	Very Good
Personal and social development	Very Good
Leadership	Very Good
Self evaluation	Good

Appendix 3 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

What pleased parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<p>Almost all parents and carers felt that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • care for pupils was good and they would recommend the school to other parents and carers; • staff responsible for the welfare of the pupils were approachable and helpful; • their children felt safe and well cared for; • any issues concerning their child would be dealt with effectively; and • they were made to feel welcome when they visited the school. 	<p>There were no significant issues.</p>
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<p>Almost all pupils felt that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their house was a good place to live in; • new pupils were given a good welcome and told what was expected of them; • when they were ill or had an accident they would be well looked after; and • they felt safe, well cared for and got on well with each other. 	<p>Around a third of pupils felt that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • toilet and showering facilities were poor; • there were not enough places to be on their own; • there was not enough to do at weekends or in the evenings; and • their personal belongings were not safe in the house. <p>Around a fifth of pupils felt that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they did not have a say in making up the house rules or how it was run; and • they did not have sufficient privacy for making and receiving calls from their families; and • there were not always sufficient staff around when they needed them.
What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<p>Staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the school's provision.</p>	<p>There were no significant issues</p>

How can you contact us?

Copies of this report have been sent to the headmaster and school staff, chairman of the Board of Governors and appropriate members of the Scottish Parliament.

Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, T1 Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD or by telephoning 0131 244 8426. Copies are also available on the HMIE web site: www.hmie.gov.uk.

Should you wish to comment on or make a complaint about any aspect of the inspection or about this report you should write either to the Care Commission or to HM Inspectorate of Education at the address below. If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.scottishombudsman.org.uk.

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