

Hall Grove School

Inspection report for boarding school

Unique reference number	SC013921
Inspection date	9 December 2008
Inspector	Veronica Crowley
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Hall Grove School London Road BAGSHOT Surrey GU19 5HZ
Telephone number	01276 473059
Email	
Registered person	Alastair Robert Graham
Head / Principal	Alastair Robert Graham
Nominated person	
Date of last inspection	8 November 2005

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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

Hall Grove School was founded in 1957 by the parents of the current headmaster. At its centre is an attractive family home set in grounds and parkland of 40 acres. It adjoins open countryside and an 18 hole golf course. The school remains privately owned and is run as a partnership between the headmaster and his wife.

In 50 years Hall Grove has grown from just six pupils to 320, and is now a thriving co-educational preparatory school. The school takes children from four to 13 years of age. Hall Grove is primarily a day school, but boarding is a popular option for older pupils and it is structured to prepare them for boarding senior schools.

Amongst its amenities Hall Grove is unusual in having its own residential study centre in Devon, and both a golf course and equestrian centre in its grounds. Other facilities include nine tennis courts, an open air swimming pool, woods, playing fields and gardens and some modern specialist teaching areas including art, science, food technology, information and communication technology, woodwork and the full range of classroom subjects.

The school offers unusually flexible boarding and day school arrangements to meet individual needs. The boarding house is set in the upper floors of the main building. It comprises several rooms shared by two, three or four pupils. The house has a comfortable sitting room and the large school library and dining hall are equipped to act as areas where indoor recreation can take place. At the time of this inspection, a Monday evening, there were 319 pupils, which included six borders and six additional pupils who attended the evening meal.

The school has attained the 'Investor in People' award.

Summary

Hall Grove School operates its boarding provision to a high standard with some outstanding outcomes for its boarders.

Boarding at the school is provided on a flexi basis and plays a very small part in the lives of most of the pupils. However, the 'extended family' ethos and exceptional pastoral care is intrinsically demonstrated throughout the school, ensuring children receive a safe and nurturing experience.

The inspection was carried out on an announced basis. The aim of the inspection was to review the key standards for boarding schools. As part of the inspection process, questionnaires were sent to parents to gain their views. Responses received were all extremely positive and indicated a high level of satisfaction with the pastoral care provided. They remarked specifically on 'the secure, relaxed, family atmosphere' extended to their children and one parent reported that 'Hall Grove is truly unique – a marvellous beginning for any child.' The school has excellent provision to meet the health and welfare needs of boarding pupils. There are robust systems in place, adopted throughout the school, which aim to protect boarders and ensure that effective responses are made in all safeguarding areas. Boarding accommodation is of a good overall standard presenting as a homely environment. Boarders benefit from excellent levels of individual support dependent on their specific needs. There are very evident, strong, nurturing relationships between staff and boarders, which foster a real sense of family living. The school clearly

demonstrates its commitment to anti-discriminatory practice, valuing and embracing diversity. The school excels in providing a range of different opportunities, both formal and informal, for boarders to contribute their views to the boarding practice. Communication between staff at all levels is a real strength of the school, ensuring boarders enjoy consistent care. Staff are encouraged and supported to undertake training opportunities and have their performances reviewed on a regular basis. There is very strong leadership overseeing and monitoring all aspects of the care provided.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the full inspection carried out in March 2004 a monitoring visit was made in November 2005 to review the status of recommendations made. One recommendation remained outstanding relating to formalising risk assessments. This recommendation has now been satisfactorily addressed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school delivers an excellent personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. It involves form teachers delivering a range of topics which include; bullying, drugs, smoking, alcohol, sex education, relationships, body image and diversity. This is further complemented by the school's own award scheme where pupils are empowered and encouraged to attain skills in leadership, adventure and service. Annual trips to the school's residential study centre in Devon complete a very rounded approach to the spiritual, moral and ethical ethos that intrinsically threads throughout the school.

The school ensures that health information is kept up to date and staff are fully aware of pupils' health and welfare needs. Medical consents from parents, as well as staff suitably trained in first aid, ensure that emergency treatment can be provided if necessary. Pupils' health is protected and promoted by the safe storage and administration of medication with appropriate records and procedures in place for this purpose. Full details are held of any accident or injury that pupils may sustain.

Pupils' specific health and welfare needs are managed very effectively. The school matron and the head of boarding are both valuable assets to the boarding provision. They work closely with staff and parents to ensure pupils' welfare needs are fully met 24 hours a day. The matron demonstrates an exceptional regard to safeguarding children and is acutely aware of specific health and emotional needs of all pupils. Boarders report feeling very well cared for and stated 'If you are sick or unhappy matron or the head of boarding will always help you and look after you'.

Pupils benefit from a high quality catering provision which provides nutritious and well balanced meals. Menus are based on a four week rolling system and change each term. The pupils are positively encouraged and educated about healthy living and great attention is paid to providing an excellent range of food to meet individual needs. There are always three hot meals on offer, one of which is vegetarian, in addition to a wide range of salad options. Fruit is available at intervals throughout the day and pupils with specific health and cultural needs are well catered

for. Evening supper is a very relaxed, 'extended family' occasion as the number of boarders are so few. The boarders feel this is a special time for them to share their day, relax and unwind.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Pupils are supported in a safe and nurturing environment where their welfare is paramount. They are protected effectively through the school's positive approach to dealing with bullying. Pupils and staff are very clear what the school's policy on bullying is. Staff are unquestionably committed to tackling and educating pupils about bullying and the impact it has on others. Pupils are involved in awareness and education of internet safety.

The robust child protection policies and procedures, which are consistent with the local Safeguarding Children Procedures, ensure pupils are safeguarded and protected. All staff receive child protection training and have a clear understanding about their responsibilities in respect of keeping children safe. The designated child protection officers for the school demonstrate a good awareness of the key legislation in respect of child protection and ensure all staff have regular training as appropriate.

Pupils are encouraged to develop self discipline and the ethos of the school supports the positive reinforcement of good behaviour. This is achieved through the minimal use of punishments and a culture which celebrates achievement and community support. The school has clear and appropriate policies and guidelines relating to behaviour, discipline and the use of punishments. Children confirmed that they considered the punishments to be fair.

The thorough and effective complaints procedure protects and promotes pupils' welfare. Parents and pupils are informed how they can raise any concerns or complaints they may have. Pupils confirmed they knew both how to raise any concern or worry, and that it would be dealt with appropriately and promptly. Records demonstrate all complaints are taken seriously, with clear outcomes and any further actions necessary.

Pupils are protected from fire by various safety precautions and well trained staff. Regular fire evacuation drills take place and fire safety equipment is checked. An external consultancy ensures all fire precautions are in line with current legislation in addition to detailed records being maintained. Boarders demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's evacuation procedure.

Boarders' privacy is respected by non-intrusive staff who are sensitive when entering dormitories and supervising bathroom areas.

Boarders' welfare is protected by a thorough and robust recruitment process. The school follows a very clear policy on recruitment in line with the Department for Children, Schools and Families guidance. The school maintains detailed records of the selection process undertaken and ensures rigorous checks are in place prior to new staff commencing work. Criminal Records Bureau checks at enhanced level are undertaken on all staff employed at the school prior to their commencement.

Boarders' welfare is protected through significant security measures throughout the school. Boarding accommodation is reserved solely for the use of those boarders designated to it. All areas are suitably protected by key pads, locks and window restrictors. The school has made

great effort to restrict access by people from outside the school and all visitors are required to sign in and wear badges throughout their visit.

Pupils are safeguarded by a raft of detailed risk assessments and well trained staff. Maintenance issues are prioritised and staff work effectively to ensure pupils are protected from unavoidable hazards. Pupils are protected by effective checking of electrical appliances and gas installations, water checking and safe storage of all substances hazardous to health. Pupils' welfare is promoted through a variety of assessments relating to activities undertaken, the school grounds and any other known risks.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils benefit from excellent levels of individual support provided by pastoral and academic staff. Form teachers and tutors play pivotal roles in the wellbeing of the pupils, providing the link between the academic and pastoral systems. The matron and head of boarding also play key roles in the lives of the boarders which further strengthens the pastoral function within the school. In addition the pupils mentioned numerous staff they would go to for support, encouragement or advice. These include the headmaster and his wife, as house parents and the gap student. Although boarders have known access to an independent listener they rely on the strong relationships fostered within the school and are clear about which members of staff they can go to for personal support. They reported that staff 'are caring and supportive,' and that 'boarding feels like home.'

Pupils' lives are enhanced through the school's commitment to equality of opportunity and the reciprocal, caring ethos experienced by them. The school positively embraces, supports and celebrates diversity. Individualised support provided to pupils is sensitive to their specific cultural and personal welfare needs. Appropriate arrangements are made for pupils whose first language is not English. Excellent provision is made for pupils with any special dietary or religious observance requirements. Pupils are fully supported to integrate into both school and boarding life. The inspirational use of movement and dance, drama, ceramic workshops and the Hall Grove Award scheme demonstrate superbly the commitment and dedication of staff to fully integrate pupils, in order to build self esteem and realise their full potential.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school fosters a whole school community approach which pupils have embraced. There is an abundance of opportunities for listening and obtaining the views of pupils which are integrated into the running of the school. These include the school council, the boarders' forum and tutorial groups where individual progress is discussed and monitored on a weekly basis. Informal forums include the open door policy adopted by the headmaster, and mealtimes, where pupils are encouraged and empowered to share their views and ideas. Boarders are able to have a say about developments at the school, and enable change to take place in relation to boarding practice. Staff respond to pupils in a positive and supportive way and pupils commented on the positive relationships they had with staff.

The school demonstrates a positive attitude to boarders' family and parental contact. Contact with family and friends is encouraged and children confirmed this. Boarders with parents overseas are able to use personal mobile phones in the boarding house and all boarders have

access to a phone. Boarders are also able to use the internet to communicate with family and friends and are educated and trusted to use this appropriately.

There are excellent formal introductions for new pupils to the school. As boarding at the school is provided on a 'flexi' basis the induction to boarding is more informal. There is a simple but effective 'Welcome to Boarding' leaflet and a boarders' notice board that keep boarders up to date with everything happening. Parents felt that using the opportunity of flexi-boarding enables pupils to experience boarding in readiness for senior schools. Boarders commented very favourably about their introduction to boarding, one saying 'I really felt welcomed by the staff and the other children' and another 'if anyone is unhappy everyone helps to make them feel better.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Due to nature of flexi boarding pocket money is not kept at the school. A suitable system is in place for this purpose, should the need arise. Boarders follow a clear protocol, respecting theirs and others' belongings, which they feel is effective.

Boarders enjoy a satisfactory standard of accommodation. It is comfortable, well lit, ventilated and heated. There is a good standard of maintenance and cleanliness. Maintenance issues are addressed effectively to ensure a comfortable, safe boarding environment is provided for the children. Personalisation in some of the dormitories is evident and adequate storage space available. There is the scope for separation by age, with staff having separate accommodation and facilities close to the provision for boarders. Boarders have sufficient space in the dormitories to change comfortably and have an area for play. All areas are carpeted. There are adequate toilet and washing facilities which are suitable for the small numbers of flexi boarders.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A comprehensive statement of boarding principles and practice is readily available to parents, boarders and staff that can be found in the prospectus, accompanying literature and on the school's website. This is reviewed and updated regularly. The school also produces a weekly newsletter for parents which is a great source of information. The website is updated regularly with news and photographs of what is happening at Hall Grove. All related literature accurately reflects the ethos of the school and the boarding experience.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school welcomes pupils from all faiths, and supports, celebrates and embraces diversity. There are numerous interlinking policies and procedures woven throughout the school which clearly demonstrate the school's commitment to anti-discriminatory practice. The school actively promotes cohesion within the small boarding group.

The number of boarders is very small and the accommodation provided is based very much upon a family model. In addition to the head of boarding, the headmaster and his wife integrate fully into boarding life. All boarders' bedrooms are close to the headmaster's living accommodation. Boarding at Hall Grove provides an extended family environment where children enjoy a warm and caring experience. This is a major factor for parents considering boarding for their children. Parents commented, via questionnaires, very favourably about the high level of

pastoral care extended, 'the secure relaxed family atmosphere' and the 'home from home' experience provided.

Pupils benefit from a very well run school. The monitoring of risk assessments, sanctions, complaints and accidents is highly effective. These demonstrate where trends or patterns may be emerging. In addition the matron keeps excellent welfare records which are shared on a 'need to know' basis with other personnel in the school. Effective communication is a strength of the school and ensures consistency of care and academic progress for the children.

Boarders' welfare is protected and promoted by good staffing levels day and night. The head of boarding post is new to the school. Her role dovetails effectively with that of the matron and the headmaster and his wife, who are the resident house parents. Training opportunities are available and encouraged where appropriate and efforts have been made to network with other preparatory schools to share information, experience and expertise. Staff receive a good induction and regular appraisals. Boarding policies and procedures are readily available to staff both in hard copy and on the school's network. Boarders confirm they always know who is on duty and how to summon assistance should the need arise. The staff ensure that physical, social and educational needs of the boarders are being met. Evidence obtained during the inspection indicates that the boarding provision is being managed in an exceptional manner. Comments received from the boarders about the staff and their boarding experience include 'it is just like a sleep over with your friends,' 'the head of boarding is just like having another mum,' 'the staff look after us well' and 'I love boarding.'

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
----------	--------	----------

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):