

# Gordon's School

Gordons School, Bagshot Road, West End, WOKING, Surrey, GU24 9PT

<b>Inspection dates</b>	26/02/2013 to 28/02/2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Outcomes for boarders	Outstanding	1
Quality of boarding provision and care	Outstanding	1
Boarders' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of boarding	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The boarding provision is outstanding because

- The quality of provision and care for boarders has an exceptional impact on the quality of their lives and boarders make exceptional progress in their educational, personal, social and cultural development.
- Boarders have access to an extensive choice of high quality activities which enable them to acquire and develop new skills and knowledge. Boarding facilities are of high quality. Boarding houses are well furnished and maintained and offer a homely environment.
- The safety of boarders is central to all the school does. Safeguarding practices are outstanding and there is excellent joint working with key agencies. Boarders feel safe and supported and are safe. Anti-bullying is high on the agenda. Because of this, there are extremely low instances of bullying within the school.
- Young people's behaviour is outstanding and the relationship between staff and boarders is one of mutual respect. There is exceptional organisation of boarding with a clear focus on meeting boarders' needs. Routine monitoring of quality of practice is used to drive forward continuous improvement.
- The views of boarders are central to the way in which the school operates and develops its practice and boarders have highly positive views about the quality of their boarding experience. The strong arrangements for communication between parents and staff ensure that parents feel confident that boarders are receiving good quality care.

### Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced at 09.00 on 26/02/2013 and commenced at 12.00 on the same day. Inspection activities carried out included discussions with boarders, boarding staff, medical centre staff, catering staff, maintenance staff and key members of the senior management team. Key boarding documents and policies were reviewed, as were the schools self assessment documents. Meals were sampled and all four boarding houses were visited. No information was available from Parent View. On-line surveys from boarders and staff were evaluated.

## Inspection team

Diane Thackrah	Lead social care inspector
Janet Hunnam	Social care inspector
Paul Taylor	Social care inspector

# **Full report**

## **Information about this school**

Gordon's school is a co-educational academy which offers boarding and day places for boys and girls aged 11 - 18 years. Boarding is offered in four houses within the school grounds.

Traditionally, the school has offered boarding to children with parents in the armed forces. Approximately 50% of the boarding population is made up from this group. The remaining boarders are a mixture of those who live locally, or who have parents who live overseas.

The school is located in Woking, Surrey. The last inspection of the school's boarding provision took place on 13/10/2009.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- The school has made good progress and now meets all the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for boarders

### Outstanding

Outcomes for boarders are outstanding. The school offers a highly inclusive boarding community and as a result boarders enjoy exceptionally good quality relationships with one another and with staff. Relationships are positive and constructive. Boarders thrive in a culture of mutual respect which is embedded into school life. A boarder said: 'I really like all the members of staff and especially the house parents, they make it what it is and are really nice, kind, helpful and lovely'. There is a culture of extremely positive behaviour within the school. There is a strong focus on boarders' personal development and a whole school ethos of respect for others. Boarders are nurtured and valued and consequently, they feel respected and develop confidence and a strong sense of self-esteem.

Boarders develop a strong sense of self their own value and a tolerance of others. A young person said: 'I do love this school and I'm so happy'. Another said: 'It is a very good school and I enjoy boarding'. The boarding experience helps boarders to develop substantially and gain excellent skills for adulthood. Boarders have excellent opportunities for reaching their full potential. They have opportunities for engaging in a wide range of enriching and stimulating activities. For example, many boarders take part in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme which involves worldwide travel. Boarders involvement in charity fund-raising, and support for community causes, helps them to develop into well rounded and caring young adults.

The voice of boarders is central to all the school does. Boarders have excellent opportunities for taking on roles and responsibilities within boarding and for making a significant contribution to boarding life. They feel listened to and respected. A young person said: 'The great thing is that people have listened to our complaints'. There is strong support for boarders which allows them to keep themselves fit and healthy. They say they receive good support from staff and are confident that they will be listened to and supported if they feel ill. They value the support they receive from the medical centre staff and as a result have a strong sense of their own well-being.

### Quality of boarding provision and care

### Outstanding

The quality of the boarding provision is outstanding. Excellent pastoral arrangements ensure a clear focus on boarders' welfare. There is an extremely well developed and thorough induction programme for new boarders which promotes their personal and academic progress. This is sensitively tailored to the needs of boarders. The role of the house parents within this is clear and ensures that new boarders receive high levels of support. New boarders value the peer mentoring system. They said this helps them to feel welcome in the school. The high aspirations that staff have for young people contribute to the promotion of boarders welfare. Boarders have access to an extremely wide range of enriching activities. These cater for a wide variety of interests and are age appropriate. For example, after school activities include sports and fitness, drama classes, horse riding and film club. A team of specialist staff provide tuition in piano, guitar, percussion and the full range strings, woodwind and brass instruments. A popular activity for boarders is membership of the school's pipes and drums band. Access to these activities provides excellent opportunities for personal development and fulfilment.

Boarders are actively involved in the running of the boarding houses. This provides them with excellent opportunities for personal growth and team working. There are many school committees which ensure that boarders have a voice. The school constantly looks at way to improve this. This is reflected in the development of the new health committee made up of boarders and staff with a view to improving the health and well-being of boarders. The well-being of boarders is central to all the school does. Achievements are celebrated and this supports boarders to make excellent achievements in all areas of their lives. The excellent arrangements

for care planning mean that boarders benefit from high quality care that reflects their individual needs. All staff are clear about their roles within the care planning system and young people are central to the planning and review of this. The safety and well-being of boarders is enhanced as a result. There are excellent facilities for boarders who are ill or injured. There is a well equipped and welcoming medical centre. This is staffed at all times by a team of caring and qualified nursing staff. Boarders feel confident that their health needs will be well addressed. This ensures the promotion of boarders their good health.

Boarders benefit from living in high quality boarding provision which they enjoy. Houses offer a high standard of accommodation which is safe and well maintained. Houses are homely and clearly designed with boarders welfare in mind. For example, they are fresh and bright and offer space for boarders to relax and be comfortable. There are games rooms, common rooms, space which is conducive to doing homework and pleasant gardens. The school's strong sense of security supports boarders to feel safe in the boarding houses. The catering arrangements in the school are of good quality. Boarders on the whole highly enjoy school meals that are healthy, varied and nutritious that reflect their preferences and dietary requirements. There is excellent organisation of the dining experience which means that meal times are pleasant, orderly occasions. There is an effective food committee and the school is not afraid to develop and change to reflect boarders views. This has resulted in the introduction of cooked suppers in the main dining hall and a number of special celebration meals.

### **Boarders' safety**

### **Outstanding**

There is excellent provision for ensuring that boarders are safe and protected from harm. Boarders' safety is at the heart of the school. There is a proactive and sustained approach to implementing the school's robust safeguarding policies and procedures. This includes safe staff recruitment and carrying out thorough checks on all staff prior to them working in the school. This helps to ensure that only suitable staff have contact with boarders. Staff are proactive and alert to concerns about the welfare of boarders. They are provided with clear information about what to do in relation to child protection. This is being extended to visitors by providing them with written and accessible guidance on child protection. All contractors and visitors to the school are closely monitored to ensure boarders' privacy and protection. Training for staff in child protection occurs with annual refreshers. Senior staff liaise closely and regularly with the local child protection team and this ensures there is a strong and confident approach to child protection. These measures keep boarders safe.

Behaviour is extremely well managed within the school through positive and proactive behaviour management strategies. There are clear roles and responsibilities for staff and clear rules and expectations for boarders. The high levels of communication between all school and boarding staff means that boarders benefit from consistent care that reflects their individual needs. The strong culture of respect within the school promotes positive relationships. There is a clear and robust approach to bullying. Bullying remains high on the schools agenda and there is a constant approach of review and reflection with a view to improvement. Staff clearly understand their roles in ensuring that bullying does not occur within the school. Boarders know that they have access to an adult that they can talk to and trust. This results in boarders feeling safe and secure and there being extremely low incidences of bullying.

Boarders live in a safe environment and are protected from risks. There are high levels of safety awareness which are embedded into the school culture. There is a sense of community responsibility for safety which results in an exceptional record of prompt and effective maintenance. Environmental and individual activity risk assessments are carried out and kept under constant review. There is constant review and reflection on practice and improvement. For example, there has recently been an increase in the use of closed circuit television in the grounds and an increase in the use of security staff. This results in the school having a strong safety

record. Fire safety is taken seriously. There is a clear awareness of fire hazards and measures are taken to reduce these. Boarders have a strong understanding of fire safety and are clear about the fire procedures.

## **Leadership and management of boarding**

## **Outstanding**

There is outstanding leadership and management which ensures that boarders make progress in all areas of their lives. There are clear aims for boarding which are translated into practice. For example, the guide to boarding, parents guide, clear staff guidelines and informative website ensure that there is a strong focus on the school's aims. Boarding is at the heart of the school. It is extremely well organised and there are clear lines of accountability amongst staff. Staff contribute to the school's positive ethos and this helps boarders to thrive. Staff are competent and highly motivated. A staff member said: 'The support from line management is outstanding'. The strong approach to staff training and development means that boarders benefit from a high level of care from staff who are up to date with developments. A real strength of the school is the highly individualised care that the staff provide. Staff are fully aware of the diverse needs of boarders and respond to these appropriately. They have a high awareness of individual strengths and needs. A staff member said: 'We take our role as house parents seriously'. This supports boarders to reach their full potential.

The leadership and management team are proactive in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's boarding provision. There are on-going efforts to take steps to improve practice following a process of review and reflection. For example, there is a self-assessment process which is reviewed on a regular basis. The school welcomes the use of external assessment to improve practice. The school uses the findings of its evaluations in order to drive improvement in pursuit of outstanding outcomes for boarders. Improvements are sustained and on-going. There is excellent communication with parents and this results in a strong approach to ensuring the best for boarders. High value is placed on boarders' views and wishes and these are actively sought. Extra support is provided to those boarders who are less confident. This means that boarders feel valued and invest in the school community. They have a strong sense of feeling that they can make a difference.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139151
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC013919
<b>DfE registration number</b>	936/5403

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	200
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 18
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Andrew Moss
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	13/10/2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01276 858084
<b>Email address</b>	info@gordons.surrey.sch.uk



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