



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

BOARDING SCHOOL

Riddlesworth Hall School

**Riddlesworth
Diss
Norfolk
IP22 2TA**

Lead Inspector
Mrs Hilary Richards

Announced Inspection
9th and 10th October 2006 09:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Boarding Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of school	Riddlesworth Hall School
Address	Riddlesworth Diss Norfolk IP22 2TA
Telephone number	01953 681246
Fax number	01953 688124
Email address	enquiries@riddlesworthhall.com
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	Col Keith Boulter
Name of Head	Mr C Campbell
Name of Head of Care	Mr C Campbell
Age range of boarding pupils	6 – 13 years
Date of last welfare inspection	Annual Visit 26/09/05 Full Boarding Welfare Inspection 17/11/03

Brief Description of the School:

Riddlesworth Hall School is an independent boarding and day school situated in the Norfolk countryside on the outskirts of Thetford. The school is located primarily in Riddlesworth Hall and a number of adjacent buildings.

The school accepts boys as day pupils from the age of 2 to 11 years of age and girls as day pupils from the age of 2 to 13 years of age; The school offers girls only boarding facilities for children aged from 6 years. All boarding accommodation is located in Riddlesworth Hall.

The school specifically caters for a number of Spanish pupils who spend varying lengths of time as boarders at the school.

SUMMARY

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

(The summary has been written in the following style so that children and young people can read it.)

The inspector visited the school before the main inspection and gave all the boarders a questionnaire to fill in. This helped the inspector know what was important to the children who stay at the school.

The inspector then spent two days at the school, staying late one evening and arriving early the next day. She ate a number of meals with the children and spent a total of 18 hours at the school.

She also:

- Spoke with the Head teacher and his wife, the matrons and other staff who look after boarders
- Spoke with the owner of the school, the Bursar and looked at some records
- Talked with two groups of boarders and also spoke with individual children who had asked to see her
- Watched how the children and staff got along together.
- Looked at all the rooms and bathrooms used by the boarders

The inspector also used other information, which she already knew about the school to write the Inspection Report.

What the school does well:

These are some of the good things that the inspector found out about the school:

- Boarders are happy and like being at the school
- Boarders are listened to by staff and there is always someone to help them if they have a problem
- Homesick children are given lots of sympathy and cuddles
- Staff and pupils like and respect each other
- There are lots of outings and activities at weekends

What has improved since the last inspection?

- New children are given a Boarding Students Handbook that gives them lots of useful information about living at the school
- The school has a new, modern fire alarm system
- Some of the dormitories have been decorated

What they could do better:

Although the school did some things well there were other things that needed to improve. The important ones are:

- Matron needs to have more people to help her care for children in the evening time
- Dormitories and bathrooms need decorating and children need to have enough furniture for all their belongings
- Regular tests must be done on equipment in the school to make sure it is working properly
- New staff must be employed properly

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders' health is promoted. (NMS 6)
- Safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records. (NMS 7)
- Boarders' receive first aid and health care as necessary.(NMS 15)
- Boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill.(NMS 16)
- Boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal Problems.(NMS 17)
- Boarders receive good quality catering provision (NMS 24)
- Boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals.(NMS 25)
- Boarders are suitably accommodated when ill. (NMS 48)
- Boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered.(NMS 49)

The Commission considers Standards 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

6, 15, 16 and 17

Quality in this outcome area is good. Children's health needs are met and they receive sympathetic care when they are ill.

EVIDENCE:

The school's matron has primary responsibility for ensuring children's health needs are met; this is delegated to the housemistress when the matron is off-duty. The matron receives support in her role from a qualified nurse who is employed in another independent school close by. The school hold signed parental permission forms for the administration of medication for all boarders and maintain appropriate records for medication administered. Boarders do not administer their own medication.

The school usually have a spare room on the boarding landing that is used as a sick bay but this was in use as a dormitory during this Inspection. The matron advised that poorly boarders would stay in their own dormitory and are subject of regular checks by the member of staff on duty. Children do not have a means of summoning urgent assistance when they are ill in bed.

The matron holds appropriate records in relation to pupils who have identified health or personal problems. Children made numerous positive comments regarding the care that they receive from boarding staff when they are homesick and both the matron and housemistress were observed to offer supportive and sympathetic care throughout the Inspection.

The school has appropriate written health guidance in place for staff and children continue to receive personal, social and health education within the classroom.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders are protected from bullying.(NMS 2)
- Boarders are protected from abuse.(NMS 3)
- Use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate.(NMS 4)
- Boarders' complaints are appropriately responded to.(NMS 5)
- The operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare (NMS 13)
- Boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school.(NMS 22)
- Boarders are protected from the risk of fire. (NMS 26)
- The welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school.(NMS 28)
- Boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities.(NMS 29)
- Boarders' personal privacy is respected.(NMS 37)
- There is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders.(NMS 38)
- Boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete recruitment checking procedures and there is supervision of all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises.(NMS 39)
- Boarders have their own accommodation, secure from public intrusion. (NMS 41)
- Boarders are protected from safety hazards.(NMS 47)

The Commission considers Standards 2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47

Quality in this outcome area is poor. Recruitment practice and routine health and safety procedures do not adequately safeguard children's welfare.

EVIDENCE:

The school has an appropriate anti-bullying policy in place that is included in the Boarding Students Handbook and the Guide for Parents. The vast majority of pupils stated that they had never experienced any form of bullying within the school. The pupil survey did highlight some tensions between the current group of Spanish boarders and other pupils but further discussions with children clarified that there were equal minor grievances on both sides regarding each other's behaviour. The Head teacher was fully aware of this situation which was being closely monitored.

The school's child protection policy is included in the staff handbook. The two most recently appointed members of boarding staff advised that they had not received a copy of this handbook and neither member of staff had received training in child protection prior to starting work.

The school has a written behaviour management policy that is implemented in practice. The standard of children's behaviour throughout the Inspection was noted to be very good and verbal chastisement by staff was limited to minor matters. The Head teacher advised that he has never had to administer any form of major punishment to a child in the school and that having a "serious talk" has to date resolved any problem that has occurred. The school complaints policy is made available to pupils and their parents through the Boarding Students Handbook and Guide for Parents; the school has not received any complaints.

The school has recently had a new fire alarm system installed and fire records within the school evidence that regular fire drills are held; children were able to clearly describe the fire evacuation procedures. The fire fighting equipment within the school is serviced annually but there is no record of the emergency lights being tested; the fire alarm has only been tested five times since the beginning of the year.

The school has failed to address the outstanding recommendation from the previous three Inspections relating to staff recruitment. The two most recently recruited members of boarding staff do not currently have CRB Disclosures, the school applied for their disclosures after they started work. The Inspector accepts that one appointment was made at short notice after a GAP student unexpectedly left but there is no explanation for the unacceptable delay in applying for the second person's CRB Disclosure. Both recently appointed staff are young women known to the school for some considerable time; if the same poor recruitment practice had been followed for any other member of staff the Commission would be forced to notify the DfES of the school's failure to adequately protect the welfare of its pupils.

The Head teacher advised that adults not employed by the school do not have unsupervised access to the boarding accommodation when the children are present. GAP students whose accommodation is part of the boarding house are verbally advised that their visitors must not enter the children's accommodation and that they are responsible for their supervision at all times. The boarding house is appropriately secure and the boarding accommodation is reserved solely for the use of boarding pupils during term time.

The school does not have a robust risk assessment process in place regarding the accommodation and external areas accessible to children. A comprehensive whole school risk assessment was undertaken in July 2004 but there is no record of the action taken to address issues of concern that were identified. The Bursar advised that he was aware of the need for a further audit of the school premises but that this had not been undertaken due to lack of time. The school also does not have an adequate PAT testing system in place; records evidence that children's electrical items are not tested when they are brought to school and school equipment has also not been tested at appropriate intervals.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders have access to a range and choice of activities.(NMS 11)
- Boarders receive personal support from staff.(NMS 14)
- Boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination.(NMS 18)
- Boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands.(NMS 27)
- Boarders have satisfactory provision to study.(NMS 43)
- Boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas.(NMS 46)

The Commission considers Standards 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

11, 14 and 18

Quality in this outcome area is excellent. The level of personal support available to individual pupils and their positive relationships with the staff team continues to be a great strength of this school.

EVIDENCE:

Children advised that they have a choice of after school clubs that are available on weekdays, as observed during the Inspection. School clubs cater for a wide range of interests, including a variety of sports and musical abilities as well as other activities. The school also offer off site trips and activities to those boarders who remain at the school at weekends. Children specifically commented on how enjoyable the weekend activities at the school are and the range of different places that they have visited.

The pupil survey identified that all boarders in the school would approach a range of members of staff with a personal problem; children stated that, "there was always someone there for them who would solve their problem". The results of the pupil survey contained numerous positive comments regarding the children's relationships with all members of the staff team. Throughout the Inspection children were observed to be confident and relaxed in their relationships with staff and the school continue to provide a structured and nurturing environment for boarders.

The school boarding population has a range of boarders from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The staff team were observed to treat all children fairly and with respect; there is no inappropriate discrimination within the school. Individual children advised that the school assist them to meet their specific cultural and religious needs.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school.(NMS 12)
- Boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families.(NMS 19)
- New boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in.(NMS 21)
- Boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school.(NMS 30)
- There are sound relationships between staff and boarders.(NMS 36)

The Commission considers Standards 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

12, 19, 21, 30 and 36

Quality in this outcome area is excellent. Boarder's views are listened to within the school and staff/children relationships are sound. Children are actively encouraged to maintain contact with their families.

EVIDENCE:

The Head teacher continues to hold weekly meetings with the boarders; pupils advised that they felt confident talking to the Head teacher as was observed during the Inspection. The Head teacher was clearly aware of issues of concern to boarders and these were being actively addressed where possible.

Boarders are able to contact their parents by telephone, email and letter; children did not identify any concerns regarding the frequency of their contact with their families. In practice, the majority of boarders also have mobile phones that they are allowed to have during the evening but are locked in the matron's office overnight and during the school day.

The school has in place a Boarding Student Handbook that is provided to all new boarders. The Handbook contains all relevant information for a new child regarding the operation of the boarding house and is written in a welcoming and child friendly style.

Boarding pupils are encouraged to take an interest in events in the outside world, all pupils watch newsround each afternoon. The Head teacher advised that the school place a strong emphasis on taking boarders off the premises at the weekend in recognition of the rural location of the school. Pupils do not leave the site unless accompanied by staff.

As stated previously, the overwhelming majority of children reported that they are looked after well and fairly. Boarders stated that staff always listen to them and take time to resolve their concerns or problems. Staff are sympathetic when children are homesick, "they always give me cuddles". The Inspector is fully confident that the relationships between staff and students are sound.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders' possessions and money are protected.(NMS 20)
- Boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation.(NMS 40)
- Boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation.(NMS 42)
- Boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities.(NMS 44)
- Boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day.(NMS 45)
- Boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school.(NMS 50)
- The welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted.(NMS 51)

The Commission considers Standard 51 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

40, 42, 44 and 51

Quality in this outcome area is poor. Boarders are not consistently provided with adequately decorated or furnished dormitories.

EVIDENCE:

The school has not satisfactorily addressed the three outstanding recommendations from previous Inspections relating to the standard of the boarding accommodation. The Inspector was pleased to note that one boarding corridor has recently been refurbished to a good standard and another is due to be completed in the October half-term, however, the main boarding landing and the children's bathrooms remain in a poor state of repair. The proprietor advised that his intention is to refurbish all areas of the boarding accommodation, and there is evidence that this is taking place, but the Inspector is concerned that work is being undertaken in so many areas at once that the children's routine within the boarding house is being disrupted as a consequence. Children complained during the Inspection that their bedrooms and personal possessions were moved from their rooms without their prior knowledge due to redecoration work.

At the present time the majority of pupils do not have adequately decorated or furnished dormitories. Boarders do not have sufficient storage space, in particular there is a lack of hanging space, and children do not have any secure storage space for personal or valuable possessions.

The school has sufficient numbers of showers, toilets and baths for boarding pupils but these are quite spread out throughout the building which makes supervision of pupils more difficult – see “Management” for additional comment. The standard of decoration in all the children’s bathrooms remains poor.

The school do not place boarders in lodgings.

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- A suitable statement of the school's principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff (NMS 1)
- There is clear leadership of boarding in the school.(NMS 8)
- Crises affecting boarders' welfare are effectively managed.(NMS 9)
- The school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare.(NMS 10)
- Risk assessment and school record keeping contribute to boarders' welfare.(NMS 23)
- Boarders are adequately supervised by staff.(NMS 31)
- Staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site.(NMS 32)
- Boarders are adequately supervised at night.(NMS 33)
- Boarders are looked after by staff with specific boarding duties, with adequate induction and continued training.(NMS 34)
- Boarders are looked after by staff following clear boarding policies and practice.(NMS 35)
- The welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

The Commission considers Standards 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

1, 8, 23, 31, 33 and 34

Quality in this outcome area is poor. The boarding house is not adequately staffed at all times and boarding staff are not provided with adequate information and guidance regarding their role.

EVIDENCE:

The school Prospectus and Welcome Booklet provide a clear statement of the boarding principles and practice; this is an accurate reflection of current boarding practice at the school.

Following the school's Annual Visit in September 2005 the Commission were advised that the recently appointed housemaster would eventually assume responsibility for the development of boarding practice at Riddlesworth; at the time of the visit he primarily worked at a sister school. In practice, there is not a housemaster at Riddlesworth School and leadership of boarding has remained the responsibility of the Head teacher; the Head teacher is retiring at the end of this academic year.

The ownership status of the school has recently changed and there is now a sole proprietor. The proprietor is taking an active involvement in the boarding house but there appears to be a lack of consultation and agreement with boarding staff regarding changes that are being made. Staff were uncertain what future developments were being planned for the boarding house and the timescales that these would be completed in.

The staff levels in the boarding house are not satisfactory at all times given the age of the boarding population. Two members of staff are on duty each morning; this time was noted to be extremely "busy" for the staff but manageable. In the evening there are either two or three members of staff on duty. Staff advised that the safe supervision of children's showers is problematic in the evening, despite the staggered bedtimes, due to the location of the showers. The Inspector is concerned that there cannot be adequate supervision of boarders when there are only two members of staff on duty. The Inspector is aware that two female GAP students are due to join the school at the end of the year but it is of concern that the current boarding staff have had to manage this situation for a whole term.

At present one person sleeps in the boarding house at night, either the housemistress or the matron, and children are able to easily contact her if needed. A number of other staff have accommodation on the premises but are not required to be available overnight to assist the person sleeping in. The Inspector was concerned that the situation may arise that the resident member of staff might have to manage an emergency situation involving the boarders without being able to summon additional adult assistance.

The two staff currently assisting in the boarding house advised that they have recently received job descriptions but do not have a copy of the staff handbook. These staff did not have an induction to their role in boarding, including child protection, but were provided with on-the-job verbal guidance and support by the matron. The Inspector is aware that the matron is in the process of compiling an Induction Pack for new boarding staff but has been unable to complete this due to pressure of time. All the staff that were spoken to highly praised the current matron and her level of support to both colleagues and pupils but also expressed concern that the scope of her job is too much for one individual. Boarding staff do not receive individual supervision to review their performance of their boarding duties.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
6	3
7	X
15	3
16	2
17	3
24	X
25	X
48	X
49	X

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	3
3	2
4	4
5	3
13	X
22	X
26	2
28	X
29	X
37	3
38	1
39	3
41	3
47	1

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
11	4
14	4
18	3
27	X
43	X
46	X

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3
19	3
21	4
30	3
36	4

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
20	2
40	1
42	2
44	3
45	X
50	X
51	N/A

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

Continued

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
8	2
9	X
10	X
23	3
31	2
32	X
33	2
34	1
35	X
52	X

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection? Yes

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action
1.	BS16	It is recommended that ill children are provided with a means of summoning urgent assistance when they are confined to bed.	01/12/06
2.	BS3	It is strongly recommended that all members of staff receive training in child protection prior to starting work.	01/12/06
3.	BS26	It is strongly recommended that the fire alarm is tested on a weekly basis.	01/11/06
4.	BS26	It is recommended that the schools emergency lighting is tested on a monthly basis and a visual check is undertaken of the fire extinguishers.	01/12/06
5.	BS38	It is strongly recommended that newly appointed staff do not start work in the boarding house until the school has applied for, and received, an Enhanced CRB Disclosure. (This is a repeat recommendation from the school's previous three Inspections)	09/10/06
6.	BS47	It is strongly recommended that the school complete a whole school risk assessment and keep written records of action taken to address identified concerns.	01/04/07
7.	BS47	It is strongly recommended that boarders electrical equipment is PAT tested prior to be used on the school premises.	01/01/07
8.	BS47	It is strongly recommended that the school's electrical equipment is PAT tested at a minimum of 3 yearly intervals.	01/01/07
9.	BS20	It is recommended that the school ensure that each boarder has lockable storage space.	01/01/07

10.	BS40	It is recommended that boarders are provided with adequate storage space, including hanging space for larger items and wet towels.	01/01/07
11.	BS40	It is strongly recommended that the school redecorate the outstanding dormitories, including adequate furniture and soft furnishings. (This is a repeat recommendation from the school's previous three Inspections)	01/08/07
12.	BS40	It is strongly recommended that the school complete an audit of all outstanding work that is required in the boarding accommodation and an associated timetable for its completion.	01/01/07
13.	BS40	It is strongly recommended that the school redecorate all the boarder's bathrooms to an appropriate standard.	01/04/07
14.	BS8	It is strongly recommended that the school put in place a designated member of staff whose primary role is to assume responsibility for the development of boarding practice.	01/04/07
15.	BS31	It is strongly recommended that there are always three members of boarding staff on duty each evening.	01/01/07
16.	BS33	It is strongly recommended that the school ensure there is a second member of staff available on the premises each night to assist the matron/housemistress if required.	01/11/06
17.	BS34	It is strongly recommended that all staff receive a copy of the Staff Handbook.	01/12/06
18.	BS34	It is recommended that all boarding and ancillary staff receive regular individual supervision. (Previous timescale of 01/01/06 not met)	01/01/07

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