

# Stanbridge Earls School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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<b>Inspector</b>	Brian Mcquoid
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<b>Head/Principal</b>	Geoffrey Phillip Link
<b>Nominated person</b>	David John Beeby
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	04/07/2006

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## 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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

### 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**

Stanbridge Earls is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 10 to 19 years. The school specialises in providing education for young people with a range of special educational needs, most notably those with a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia. The school has specialist and experienced teaching staff and high teacher to pupil ratios.

The school is located in 50 acres of landscaped grounds close to the small town of Romsey. The majority of pupils are boarders and the boarding provision is organised by year group into 9 residential units of varying size.

### **Summary**

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The school provides an environment for pupils within which they feel safe, where they are well cared for, and where their personal, social and educational development is able to take place. There are clear and effective admission procedures and excellent information provided for pupils and their parents. The staff group at the school provide specialised individual support across the education and care settings and work extremely effectively as a team for the benefit of pupils. There is very good provision for addressing the routine and specific health needs of pupils, and good access to external health professionals. The school provides a safe physical environment for pupils, and they enjoy positive relationships with staff and with each other. Bullying is not a problem at the school. There is excellent communication across the school, parents are routinely consulted and kept informed about events affecting their child, and there are regular opportunities for pupils to express their views. The school's deputy head plays a pivotal role in overseeing and monitoring pastoral matters within the school and does so extremely effectively. Staff are well supported and provided with opportunities for training specific to their role as pastoral carers. The only welfare concern identified during the inspection was in relation to recruitment where procedures are not being effectively monitored.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Since the previous inspection the school has improved in the following areas: An effective system for notifying Ofsted of significant events has been introduced. There is now a designated member of staff with responsibility for testing fire safety equipment, and boarding staff have undertaken specific fire prevention and fire awareness training. In addition there are now risk assessments in place for off site educational visits. These three areas relate directly to action taken by the school to

address the recommendations from the previous report.

The Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils has upgraded the school's registration status from Designated Unit to Specialist Provision School in recognition of the improvements made by the school. The school has appointed a staff development co-ordinator and has established a parents association. A whole school development plan has also been completed and published.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

The school has clear and effective procedures for identifying and recording the health related needs of pupils prior to admission. Boarding pupils are registered with the local surgery, there is a weekly clinic held at the school, and pupils have access to a male or female doctor. Pupils benefit from very good health care provision on site. Clinics are held throughout the day, seven days a week, in the school's medical centre, when a qualified nurse from the school's team of nurses is on duty. An overnight on call duty rota provides medical advice, and assistance when necessary, and in addition there are always first aid trained staff available. External agencies are referred to when necessary and there is good access to a counsellor for pupils. Individual plans address the specific health needs of pupils and excellent communication systems across the campus ensure information is shared on a need to know basis. There are clear policies and procedures relating to medication administration, including self administration, and records are well maintained. Health promotion and education is covered during the citizenship programme and is fully supported by the school's nurses, tutors, and external agencies. Topics covered include, healthy lifestyles, sex education, alcohol, smoking, and drugs. The school is a non smoking environment.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Pupils at the school have their privacy appropriately respected, and there are good arrangements for maintaining the confidentiality of information. There are supporting policy and procedures documents covering privacy and confidentiality, and these provide clear guidance for staff in these areas. Individual records are stored securely within the school and information is shared on a need to know basis only via the school's intranet. Pupils are able to make telephone calls and send e-mails in private, and report that staff do not intrude inappropriately upon their privacy.

The school's complaints procedures are given to all pupils and their parents and include the contact details of Ofsted. Records of complaints are maintained appropriately and show an extraordinarily low level of complaints received over recent years. This is a reflection of the positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils, and the school and pupil's parents. Problems are effectively addressed and resolved at an early stage because pupils are able to approach staff with any

personal issues they may have, and by the excellent communication there is with pupil's parents.

The welfare of pupils is suitably protected by the arrangements for child protection at the school. The deputy head (pastoral) is the school's child protection liaison officer (CPLO) and has undertaken training relevant to the role. The school's head is also appropriately trained for the role and provides cover when necessary. Staff are clearly aware of how to respond to disclosures or allegations of abuse and have good access to the school's policy and procedures relevant to child protection. All newly appointed staff, including ancillary staff, cover child protection as part of their induction. The school's CPLO provides an annual report to the governing body entitled 'Safeguarding Our Community'. This is a comprehensive report on all aspects of 'Staying Safe' and which is linked directly to the National Minimum Standards. In addition there is a nominated school governor who maintains an oversight of child protection matters within the school and feeds back regularly to the governing body. Records of child protection related incidents are maintained efficiently and show the school to have acted appropriately and according to procedures. The school has good working relationships with the police and the local children's services department.

Pupils feel safe at the school, and benefit from an effective approach to bullying. There are clear guidelines for staff and pupils on what to do if bullying is experienced, witnessed, or suspected. Bullying is covered as a topic during the school's citizenship programme, and the results of an annual survey carried out in relation to the subject clearly shows there is a continuing decline in incidents where bullying has occurred.

The school provides excellent information for pupils which makes explicit the expectations in term of their behaviour. There is a clearly stated school 'Code of Conduct' detailing the rules applicable to pupils and a rewards and sanctions policy which includes the provision for excluding a pupil. Pupils consider the rules at the school to be fair and to be fairly applied by staff with no inappropriate sanctions being used. The school places a strong emphasis on the development of mutual trust and courtesy and respect for others. The positive relationships between pupils, between staff and pupils, and the general standard of pupil behaviour shows the school's approach to be succeeding.

The welfare of pupils is well protected by the school's provision for health and safety. There is a comprehensive policy, a health and safety committee meet regularly and there are dedicated staff with areas of associated responsibility. Arrangements for the management of risk across the campus are effective and include provision for the premises, and on and off site activities undertaken by pupils. Overseas activity trips take place annually and provision for these was seen to accord with strict guidelines and to include a prior assessment visit to the venue. Risk assessments are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The school's arrangements for fire safety are deemed satisfactory by the fire authority, and tests and checks of related equipment are carried out as required. Pupils are aware of the fire evacuation procedures and fire drills are carried out on a regular basis.

The school have recruitment procedures in place which accord with the National Minimum Standards. The procedures are however, not being effectively implemented or monitored. Records show gaps in procedures, most notably in relation to references.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils at the school benefit from a remarkably integrated approach across the care and education settings. There is excellent informal and formal communication across the school and the majority of house parents providing pastoral care within the boarding houses are also teachers at the school. The staffing structure at the school ensures a co-ordinated approach to the personal, social, and educational development of pupils, with housemasters, tutors, and house parents, working closely together to support pupils in all of these areas. All pupils have evening prep where they are supervised and supported by specialist subject teachers. This takes place within the education setting. There is, however, computer access in all boarding houses, including the facility for pupils to use laptops in their own rooms, which enables pupils to access the internet and educational resources.

The school provides excellent levels of individual support for pupils. As a recognised and accredited specialist school there is exceptional individual support within the educational setting. This is provided by specialist teachers, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists. There is also very good support for those pupils who have English as a second language. Staff at the school are very approachable, and pupils are able to discuss personal or welfare problems with a number of people. These include the school's counsellor, their personal tutors, housemasters and housemistresses, house parents, and appointed independent persons. The school also provides good individual support for those pupils with specific health needs and have good access to external professionals when necessary.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

There are good opportunities provided, both formally and informally, for pupils to be able to express their views about how the school operates and any matters affecting them. There is an elected school council that meets regularly, a pupils 'Voice' magazine is published termly, and pupils are consulted and contribute to their annual reviews. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with staff, there is always someone

available for them to talk to, and regular house meetings are held within all boarding houses. The meetings are not recorded, however, and some pupils do feel unable to make their views known and have a say in what happens at the school. There is excellent communication with pupils parents, and they are consulted and kept informed appropriately about matters affecting their children.

The school has clear and effective admission procedures which identify and record in detail the educational and welfare needs of prospective pupils. Pupils also undertake a three day trial period at the school in order to assess whether the school can meet their needs. Clearly defined plans are devised to address the needs of pupils in all relevant areas and these are subject to regular review.

There is excellent provision at the school enabling pupils to maintain contact with their parents and families. There are telephones available in each boarding house, pupils are allowed to use mobile phones, there are facilities for e-mailing in each boarding house also, and this includes pupils being able to use laptops within their rooms. Parents are freely able to visit the school and are made to feel very welcome.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The school provides excellent written information for pupils and their parents. This includes both pupil and parent handbooks, a well produced and colourful school brochure containing photographs of the school in operation, and handy 'new pupil' guides. In addition, parents are provided with copies of relevant policy and procedures documents. The information provided gives a very clear picture of the school, the principles under which it operates, its aims for pupils, and a suitable overview of life as a boarder. The school also has an informative website.

Pupils benefit from extremely positive and mutually respectful relationships with staff at the school. There is an integrated approach to working with pupils across the care and education settings that is supported by excellent formal and informal communication between staff. The staff group possess a wealth of expertise and experience between them, they operate extremely effectively as a team, provide a continuity of care that is beneficial to pupils, and are well qualified to meet their needs. Although they receive good support there is currently no formally structured induction programme for staff new to boarding. There are always staff available within boarding houses and pupils feel that staff are very approachable and supportive of them. Some older pupils assume responsibilities appropriate to their position in the school and act as positive role models for younger pupils.

The staffing structure across the school provides very effectively for the provision of pastoral care and the protection and promotion of pupil welfare. The school's deputy head (pastoral), provides excellent support for staff and plays an extremely important and effective role in the overall monitoring of the welfare provision for boarding pupils. The monitoring process also includes the effective involvement of the school's governing body. Comprehensive policies and procedures underpin all aspects of the school's operation. Procedures for the recruitment of staff however, are currently not being monitored effectively.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Recommendations**

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

- make provision for the effective monitoring of recruitment procedures. (NMS 32) (Welfare Concern)
- review, in consultation with boarding pupils, the current provision for them to be able to express their views and make suggestions in relation to the school and its operation. (NMS 2)
- devise a structured induction programme for all staff newly appointed to roles associated specifically to boarding and the pastoral care of boarding pupils. (NMS 29)