



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Boarding School

Stowe School

Buckingham

Bucks

MK18 5EH

7th – 11th March 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of School

Stowe School

Address

Buckingham, Bucks, MK18 5EH

Tel No:

01280 818000

Fax No:

01280 818181

Email Address

Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school

Dr Anthony Wallersteiner

Name of Head

Mr Anthony Wallersteiner

CSCI Classification

Boarding School

Type of school

Independent boarding school

Date of last boarding welfare inspection

09/03/99

Date of Inspection Visit		7th March 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of CSCI Inspector	1	Mr Rob Smith	114335
Name of CSCI Inspector	2	Ms Chris Schwarz	
Name of CSCI Inspector	3	Mr Guy Horwood	
Name of CSCI Inspector	4		
Name of Boarding Sector Specialist Inspector (if applicable):		Mrs Angela Tear	
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Was this inspection conducted alongside an ISI or OfSTED inspection as part of a Joint Whole School Inspection?			NO
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		DR ANTHONY WALLERSTEINER - HEAD	

CONTENTS

Introduction to Report and Inspection

Inspection visits

Brief Description of the school and Boarding Provision

Part A: Summary of Inspection Findings

What the school does well in Boarding Welfare

What the school should do better in Boarding Welfare

Conclusions and overview of findings on Boarding Welfare

Notifications to Local Education Authority or Secretary of State

Implementation of Recommended Actions from last inspection

Recommended Actions from this inspection

Advisory Recommendations from this inspection

Part B: Inspection Methods Used & Findings

Inspection Methods Used

- 1. Welfare Policies and Procedures**
- 2. Organisation and Management**
- 3. Welfare Support to Boarders**
- 4. Staffing**
- 5. Premises**

Part C: Lay Assessor's Summary (where applicable)

Part D: Head's Response

D.1. Comments

D.2. Action Plan Status

D.3. Agreement

INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Boarding schools are subject to inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) to determine whether the welfare of children (ie those aged under 18) is adequately safeguarded and promoted while they are accommodated by the school.

Inspections assess the extent to which the school is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, published by the Secretary of State under Section 87C of the Children Act 1989, and other relevant requirements of the Children Act 1989 as amended.

Inspections are carried out by the CSCI, and in most cases the inspection team includes a specialist in boarding provision working, or with experience of working, in the boarding sector. Boarding welfare inspections by CSCI may also be carried out in conjunction with a full inspection of the school by the Independent Schools Inspectorate or OfSTED, so that the two inspections together constitute a Joint Whole School Inspection of the school. In such cases, a joint summary of main findings and recommendations from both inspections will also be available.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Stowe School.

The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Recommended Action by the school
- Advisory recommendations on boarding welfare
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the lay assessor (where relevant)
- The Head's response and proposed action plan to address findings

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections are undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Children Act 1989 as amended, with additional visits as required.

The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Stowe is an independent boarding school and was providing, at the time of this inspection, termly boarding for a total of 536 boarders in the age range of 13-19; of the 536, 450 were boys and 86 were girls. The school currently admits female boarders at the sixth form stage, although plans to go fully co-educational are in place and the process of admitting younger female boarders will start in the next school year. An additional 56 pupils (43 boys and 13 girls) attend the school on a day basis.

The school aims to provide a broad based education for pupils with stated focus on encouraging the unique talents of each, in whatever academic, artistic or sporting field they might excel. The school has an underlying Christian ethos but does accept pupils from other religious backgrounds.

The school is situated amidst magnificent landscaped grounds on the outskirts of the town of Buckingham. The school is housed in a mixture of historic listed buildings, including the main Stowe House, which are undergoing a long-term programme of renovation, and more modern purpose-built academic and residential accommodation. The school's landscaped gardens are maintained by the National Trust and are open to the public at certain times of year, as is the House when not occupied by the school.

Boarding accommodation is provided in ten separate boarding houses of varying ages and standards, located in and around the school's grounds, or within the main historic Stowe House itself.

The school was last fully inspected in March 1999 by the local authority inspection unit with a follow-up visit in 2000. An Independent Schools Inspectorate inspection took place in March 2003, which did not identify any welfare concerns. This current inspection was the first against the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and the inspection was conducted by three CSCI inspectors and a Boarding Schools Professional Inspector.

[NB Please note that throughout this report, for the sake of simplicity, the term housemaster is at times used to refer to both housemasters and housemistresses]

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL IN BOARDING WELFARE

Inspectors judged the school did well in the following areas of boarding welfare practice.

The school had clear and accurate information available for staff, pupils and parents on the ethos and operational principles of the school.

Boarding houses were generally well organised and run and there was a good level of senior management oversight of, and input into, the day-to-day aspects of boarding welfare.

The school provided very good levels of individual support to pupils, both on a general basis and also particularly for pupils with more complex welfare needs. There were very good systems for the identification, sharing and recording of welfare concerns with regard to individual pupils amongst relevant staff. Child protection incidents were promptly reported to the relevant agencies and appropriately managed to ensure the safety of pupils.

The induction of new boarders was very well managed and the school setting provided a wide range of people to whom pupils could refer if they had any concerns or worries.

Clear and effective disciplinary policies and procedures were in place and were very well monitored by senior staff. Pupil behaviour standards were high. The prefect system was well managed and supported.

Relationships between staff and pupils were generally seen to be very positive and were indicative of an open, honest atmosphere in which the views and concerns of pupils were taken seriously.

Good attention was paid to the management of substance abuse and other significant health risks likely to be faced by pupils. Good medical support was provided by the sanatorium and local GP service.

The school provided an extensive and varied range of recreation opportunities for pupils in an attractive and peaceful setting.

WHAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO BETTER IN BOARDING WELFARE

The following summarises the key areas for action by the school.

The school needed to put in place an appropriate level of child protection training for ancillary staff and child protection procedures and guidance needed some minor amendment. Clearer information on contacting CSCI was needed in complaints information provided to pupils and their parents.

The governing body needed to develop improved ways of monitoring welfare provision for boarders and the overall monitoring of key records by senior staff need improvement to meet the expectations of the standards.

Improvements were needed to the recording and management of medication in boarding houses and to the overall recording and monitoring of accidents suffered by pupils. More detail was needed in the written welfare plans for pupils with significant welfare needs. The level of nursing supervision for pupils in the sanatorium needed review alongside installation of some form of call bell system and consideration of the need for the installation of mobility aids for pupils.

The school needed to explore safe ways of retaining fire doors in open positions in liaison with the fire authority and attention needed to be paid to the risks posed by the poor state of some of the roadways and to the risks posed by upper floor window openings. Some minor changes were needed to the risk assessment procedures for high risk activities undertaken by pupils.

Urgent attention needed to be paid to recruitment procedures to ensure all staff working at the school went through the same process of checks and vetting. The job descriptions for staff undertaking boarding duties needed review and updating and a more formal structure of induction training for those staff was also recommended.

The school needed to ensure adequate funds were allocated to bring the quality of accommodation in boarding houses up to a more consistent standard and better attention needed to be paid to the cleaning of boarding house areas. A number of bathroom, toilet and changing room areas needed attention to bring them up to an acceptable standard.

The accommodation used for internal rustication needed full assessment as to its suitability.

CONCLUSIONS AND OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ON BOARDING WELFARE

Inspectors were impressed with the commitment shown by the school to the welfare needs of pupils. Overall, inspectors judged the pupils to be safe and well cared for by an experienced and well-motivated team of school teaching and pastoral staff, well supported by ancillary and administrative teams. Pupils were seen to be generally happy to be at the school and saw boarding as a positive experience.

While some of the recommendations made do need urgent attention, for example those relating to staff recruitment practice and the propping open of fire doors, the majority focus on the need to develop and improve existing practice, particularly with regard to record-keeping and more formal monitoring of key aspects of welfare practice. The major underlying issue for the school remains the variable quality of the boarding accommodation arising largely, but not wholly, from the age and design of some of the accommodation used. Although significant improvements have been made since the last welfare inspection continued funding and attention in this area will be needed to ensure all the accommodation reaches the expected standard.

Inspectors would like to formally thank the school staff and pupils for their co-operation, openness assistance and hospitality in the course of this inspection.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IDENTIFIED FROM THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The Head is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how Recommended Action are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

RECOMMENDED ACTION			
Identified below are the actions recommended on issues addressed in the main body of the report in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders adequately in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. The references below are to the relevant Standards. Non-implementation of recommended action can lead to future statutory notification of failure to safeguard and promote welfare.			
No	Standard*	Recommended Action	
1		That the school puts in place child protection training for ancillary staff	30/09/05
2	BS3	That the school amends its child protection policy to fully accord with the expectations of this standard and submits the revised policy for approval by the local ACPC.	31/07/05
3	BS5	That the school amends written information on complaints and concerns provided for pupils and parents to make clear the role and contact details for CSCI and that central records of serious complaints are developed in line with the comments made in the main body of the report under this standard.	31/07/05
4	BS8	That the governing body puts in place more effective systems for the monitoring of welfare provision by the school.	30/09/05
5	BS15	That the school ensures records of medication administered are maintained in sufficient detail and that clearer arrangements are put in place for assessment of pupils' ability to safely self-administer medication.	31/07/05
6	BS15	That the school arranges formal training on up to date medication administration practice for all those staff with responsibility for administering medication.	30/09/05
7	BS15	That the school reviews its systems for the recording and monitoring of accidents to pupils to ensure the expectations of this standard are met.	30/09/05

8	BS16	That the school reviews the level of nursing cover provided in the sanatorium and ensures there are satisfactory systems in place for sick pupils to summon assistance.	30/09/05
9	BS17	That the school ensures more detailed welfare plans are maintained in relation to pupils with significant welfare needs.	31/07/05 and ongoing
10	BS20	That the school ensures boarding houses are kept secure at all times, including during cleaning periods.	30/06/05
11	BS23	That the school reviews its current systems for records monitoring to ensure the expectations of this standard are consistently met.	31/07/05
12	BS25	That the school ensures better standards of cleanliness and hygiene are maintained in boarding house kitchen areas.	30/06/05 and ongoing
13	BS26	That the school ensures the practice of propping open fire doors ceases and that the advice of the fire authority is sought where particular fire doors need to be retained in an open position.	31/05/05 Immediate
14	BS29	That the school reviews its risk assessment procedures for high risk activities to ensure appropriate verification and countersigning of their content and clearer evidencing of the qualifications of external agencies offering high risk activities.	30/09/05
15	BS34	That the school reviews and updates job descriptions for boarding staff and ensures they clearly indicate to whom such staff are responsible.	30/09/05
16	BS34	That the school develops formal and recorded induction programmes for all staff undertaking boarding duties.	30/09/05
17	BS38	That the school urgently reviews its approach to the recruitment of staff to ensure that all aspects of recruitment as laid out under this standard are consistently addressed for all staff and evidence to that effect retained on their files.	31/05/05
18	BS40	That the school ensures that adequate funding is allocated on an ongoing basis to ensure boarding accommodation is brought up to and maintained at a consistently satisfactory standard across all boarding house areas.	30/09/05
19	BS40	That the school ensures better attention is paid to the cleaning of boarding house areas.	30/06/05 and ongoing

20	BS42	That the school ensures that any pupils requiring larger beds are provided with that facility.	30/09/05 and ongoing
21	BS44	That the school addresses the points raised for attention by inspectors in the main body of the report under this standard with regard to bathroom and toilet provision.	30/09/05
22	BS45	That the school addresses the concerns raised about the effectiveness of the showers in the Grenville junior boot room and the privacy of those in the Chatham junior boot room and improves the general cleanliness and tidiness of changing room areas in boarding houses.	30/09/05
23	BS47	That the school takes further action in conjunction with English Heritage to ensure the potholes in roadways are repaired.	30/09/05
24	BS47	That the school carries out a review of the safety of upper floor windows in pupil accessible areas and risk assesses the need for installation of window restrictors.	31/07/05
25	BS48	That the school seeks the advice of an occupational therapist with regard to installation of mobility aids in the sanatorium toilet and bathroom areas.	30/09/05
26	BS51	That any accommodation used for the purposes of internal rustication is fully assessed as to its suitability, in line with the expectations of this standard.	30/09/05

ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

Identified below are advisory recommendations on welfare matters addressed in the main body of the report and based on the National Minimum Standards, made for consideration by the school.

No	Refer to Standard*	Recommendation
1	BS2	That the school continues to closely monitor and address the incidence of casual name-calling related to pupils' ethnic or cultural background and any inappropriate exercise of influence by older over younger pupils.
2	BS4	That the school further develops its guidance for staff on physical intervention as outlined in the body of this report and is more consistent about the recording of more minor disciplinary measures used within houses.

3	BS5	That the school maintains more consistent records of complaints managed within houses and considers the introduction of complaints and concerns 'post boxes'.
4	BS7	That the school ensures regular annual updates of key welfare information are sought from parents.
5	BS8	That the school considers further development of the role of the Head of Boarding.
6	BS20	That the school explores the viability of providing locking facilities for all the smaller shared and single rooms used by boarders and ensures boarders are reminded of the measures they should take themselves to ensure the security of their belongings.
7	BS35	That the school develops a handbook, or equivalent, to specifically address the roles and responsibilities of matrons
8	BS42	That the school explores the viability of providing more storage space for clothes and personal belongings in the larger dorms.
9	BS44	That the school reviews the adequacy of male toilet facilities in the science block area.

*Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix. E.g. BS10 refers to Standard 10.

SCHOOL INFORMATION:

AGE RANGE OF BOARDING PUPILS FROM

12

 TO

19

NUMBER OF BOARDERS (FULL TIME + WEEKLY) AT TIME OF INSPECTION:

Boys	<table border="1" data-bbox="842 463 938 539"><tr><td>450</td></tr></table>	450
450		
Girls	<table border="1" data-bbox="842 539 938 616"><tr><td>86</td></tr></table>	86
86		
Total	<table border="1" data-bbox="842 645 938 721"><tr><td>536</td></tr></table>	536
536		
Number of separate Boarding Houses	<table border="1" data-bbox="842 721 938 797"><tr><td>10</td></tr></table>	10
10		

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which standards have been met. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

WELFARE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff.
- Boarders are protected from bullying.
- Boarders are protected from abuse.
- Use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate.
- Boarders' complaints are appropriately responded to.
- Boarders' health is promoted.
- Safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records.

Standard 1 (1.1 – 1.4)

A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The school provided a good range of information for parents, boarders and staff on the school's ethos and key operational principles in academic and boarding time. This was provided in the school's prospectus, personal handbooks for all pupils and written guidance for staff. The school also had an informative website providing much background information on the history and ethos of the school, as well as a copious amount of day to day information on school activities, boarding house staffing, pupil achievements, current menus etc.

Standard 2 (2.1 – 2.6)

The school should have an effective policy on countering bullying, which is known to parents, boarders and staff and which is implemented successfully in practice.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The school had clear policies in place to address bullying and discussion with staff and pupils indicated a generally good understanding of how they operated, and an indication of general effectiveness. The message that bullying would not be tolerated, and that any concerns needed to be reported promptly to staff, was strongly and repeatedly put over through verbal and written means to pupils and staff.

That said there were examples highlighted by the school itself, and by feedback from parents to inspectors, of one or two examples of recent calculated and targeted bullying that had gone unnoticed for significant periods. Once uncovered, these had been dealt with firmly by the school and appropriate sanction, including expulsion, considered. These appeared however to be isolated, if individually concerning, examples in a general atmosphere in which both questionnaire and direct feedback from pupils indicate bullying was not seen as a significant issue for the vast majority of pupils. Positive comparisons were in fact given by some pupils between Stowe and other secondary boarding environments that they had experienced.

Inspectors were also impressed by the handling of a number of more minor bullying incidents by house staff who had dealt with both victims and perpetrators in subtle and discreet ways that had effectively dealt with problems, without exposing either party to inappropriate group censure or ridicule.

Evidence was seen on a number of house-based records for pupils of early communication of initial bullying concerns by housemasters to the Head and other relevant staff.

Such bullying as was identified by pupils was usually of teasing and names calling, a point particularly raised by a number of pupils from overseas and minority ethnic backgrounds. Inspectors did also receive feedback from younger pupils, although not expressed in terms of bullying, about casual assertion by some older pupils of their perceived authority in school and boarding settings, for example by ousting younger pupils from prime chairs in common rooms, queue jumping at mealtimes or encouraging younger pupils to buy tuck shop items from them. These are both aspects of pupil behaviour that the school will need to monitor closely to ensure they do not get out of hand.

PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS REPORTING NEVER OR HARDLY EVER BEING BULLIED

82

%

Standard 3 (3.1 – 3.9)

The school should have, and follow, an appropriate policy on child protection and response to allegations or suspicions of abuse, which is consistent with local Area Child Protection Committee procedures, and is known to staff and, as appropriate, to older boarders in positions of responsibility.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The school had a generally appropriate set of policies, procedures and guidance in place and child protection matters were overseen by the deputy Head, who was appropriately trained and experienced in child protection matters. Some minor amendments to the school's policies and procedures were needed to fully accord with the expectations of the standard; covering, for example, the support mechanisms available to staff subject to investigation and clearer indication of the role of, and ways to contact, CSCI. These were discussed in detail with the Deputy Head. The revised policy should also be submitted to the local ACPC to seek formal approval of its contents.

Staff spoken with were clear about the steps to take within the school should child protection concerns arise, but were largely unaware of the role of CSCI as another potential contact point for any child protection concerns that they might have. Pupils were similarly unaware of CSCI. This should be addressed in the written guidance provided to staff and pupils.

The Deputy Head maintained a central record of child protection incidents and these showed that those that had arisen since the last inspection had been dealt with generally appropriately, with prompt notification to, and co-operation with, relevant external agencies. The inspector did however point out the need for continuing liaison with the local social services departments should any issues that the school had been given leave to pursue by itself subsequently reveal new, previously unknown information that required further social services evaluation.

Contact by inspectors with the local social services department confirmed they were duly informed of all relevant incidents and had no current concerns. Some observations were made about aspects of school practice emerging from an investigation in 2002 into serious abuse by an older pupil of younger pupils, however, in the view of the inspector, these had been addressed as far as reasonably possible by the school.

In addition to the training provided for the deputy Head it was good to note that specific child protection training had also been provided for each of the housemasters at the school. More general training for school staff had been addressed by internal training sessions, in addition to specific induction on the subject for new house boarding and tutorial staff. Records of this training were maintained by the deputy Head. One particular shortfall in training noted at this inspection was the lack of any form of child protection training or briefing for ancillary staff. This needed developing as a matter of urgency.

The need in future to sustain a rolling programme of regular updating and refresher training for all staff was emphasised by inspectors. As part of training programmes it will also be important for the school to clarify and amplify the role of CSCI to all staff.

Standard 4 (4.1 - 4.7)

The school should have, and follow, a fair and appropriate policy on behaviour, discipline and use of punishments, known to boarders, staff and parents.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 3

The school's overall approach to matters of discipline and sanctions was seen to be satisfactory. Clear guidance on behaviour expectations, discipline and sanctions was made available to new pupils and their parents and clearly outlined in staff and pupil handbooks.

Within the guidance to staff on behaviour management a section, (Calming the Violent Pupil), did acknowledge there would be times when physical intervention might be required to ensure the safety of pupils and staff however the guidance did not then go on to describe in detail the specific considerations and safeguards that should be taken into account when carrying out any form of physical intervention. For example for such intervention to be the minimum required to make the situation safe, that it should be applied for the minimum time possible, that carrying out restraint in isolated situations with no witness should be avoided etc. The school needed to seek appropriate advice and input to develop this aspect of its behaviour management policy.

The majority of pupils were satisfied with the exercise of discipline by staff and, where permitted, prefects, though a low level of persistent comment was made by pupils about inconsistencies between different staff in their tolerance or intolerance of minor misbehaviour, particularly in academic settings. Some pupils also commented on the tiring effect of the combination of sanctions and defaulters, which meant a long day capped at each end by 'punishment', although inspectors did not feel this was particularly injurious to their welfare.

Although each house clearly had its own emphasis in relation to behaviour management approaches, largely determined by the philosophy of the individual housemasters, there was no evidence of significant variation in discipline regimes or deviation from overall school policies. One house was, apparently successfully, piloting an incentive based 'status' scheme to encourage good behaviour rather than punish the inappropriate. This may be a model that could be extended other houses.

All major punishments and sanctions were being effectively recorded, monitored and analysed via the school's own information database, Apollo. This, and the overall management of discipline were overseen by the senior master. All teaching and boarding staff could also access the Apollo system to check the discipline status and pattern for individual pupils at any time as a useful gauge on significant changes in pupil's behaviour patterns. More serious sanctions, such as rustication, suspension or expulsion were also logged into his system, rather than in the separate written record expected under the National Minimum Standards. Inspectors undertook to clarify with CSCI policy advisers whether this was acceptable.

More minor punishments were issued in houses in response to particular minor incidents and might, for example, involve clearing up litter or similar 'community' oriented recompense. The recording of these minor punishments was inconsistent across the houses and inspectors would advise improvement in this area to ensure that, as such punishments could sometimes be handed out by house 'officers', they are consistently recorded and subsequently monitored by housemasters to ensure fairness.

Pupil behaviour observed in the school and boarding houses was generally very good showing tolerance and consideration not only towards staff and visitors, but also each other, even when staff supervision and presence were less immediately evident.

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.7)

The school should have, and follow, an appropriate policy on responding to complaints from boarders and parents.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The school had a formal complaints process in place for both pupils and parents on which written guidance was provided, and central records were being maintained of serious complaints and related correspondence. Pupil spoken with knew how, and with whom, to raise concerns and this was also reflected in the wide range of routes they would use, indicated in questionnaire feedback. It was reassuring to note the general view pupils had of the approachability of the Head in relation to any concerns they might have.

As with child protection matters, staff, pupils, and, judging from letters received, parents were not widely aware of the potential role of CSCI in relation to complaints. This warranted greater detail in the written information on complaints provided to pupils and their families.

Scrutiny of the central records of serious complaints indicated that the school had responded fully and fairly to the recent complaints received, although the complaining parties were evidently not always fully satisfied with the responses received. The central record would benefit from clearer indication, in summary form, of the nature of each complaint, the steps taken to manage it and the final outcome (including the view of the complainant) rather than the current simple accumulation of correspondence. A formal system for regular annual review and reporting on complaints and their resolution to the governing body would also add greater transparency and oversight to the management of complaints.

Within the houses, as with sanctions, the systems for recording lower level concerns/complaints, and how they were dealt with, were somewhat patchy and would benefit from more consistency. Some houses had also used anonymous 'post boxes' for individual pupils to discretely raise concerns about themselves or other pupils. Inspectors felt this was a potentially useful initiative that the school should consider adopting in a more formal and consistent manner across boarding houses.

Number of complaints, if any, received by CSCI about the school during last 12 months:	0
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Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.3)

The school should have, and follow, an appropriate policy on countering major risks to health, including substance abuse.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The school had, overall, a very thorough approach to measures to combat substance misuse in terms of pupils' education and support and, where appropriate, disciplinary measures.

The unacceptability of substance abuse, including smoking, at the school, and the likely consequences, were made clear in written policies and guidance for pupils and parents and the school obtained parental permission for drug and alcohol testing as part of normal admission procedures. Disciplinary and other records provided evidence of a rigorous response to drug or alcohol related incidents, resulting, on occasion, in either suspension or expulsion depending on the severity or repeatedness of the transgressions.

Alongside 'punishment', through a recently revised and comprehensive PSHE programme, with which inspectors were impressed, the school provided education on an appropriate range of health risks, including substance abuse, likely to be entertained by this age range of pupils. This programme was supported by information and advice sessions on age relevant topics offered by the doctors and nurses based in the sanatorium, alongside the more informal ongoing support offered by house staff, tutors and the school's counselling service. The school was particularly aware of the risks posed by eating disorders and staff had received recent training input on this subject.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.5)

Adequate records should be kept in relation to individual boarders' health and welfare needs and issues.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The school collated and maintained appropriate health and significant welfare information about pupils at the point of admission and this was shared amongst key staff responsible for pupils' care needs in boarding houses and in the sanatorium. Appropriate information on emergency contact numbers for parents or, where relevant, guardians were also obtained as part of initial admission information. Inspectors were however not clear on how often this information was formally updated in liaison with parents and would advise, if this is not already done, that an annual updating request on key welfare information is made of parents.

With appropriate confidentiality safeguards in place, pupil medical, health needs and treatment information were also entered on to the Apollo system for ready access and scrutiny by relevant and authorised staff.

Satisfactory attention was paid to the confidentiality of information about pupils' welfare needs and concerns, within the constraints applied by the need to share such information effectively amongst the staff members with direct responsibility for their care.

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- **There is clear leadership of boarding in the school.**
- **Crises affecting boarders' welfare are effectively managed.**
- **The school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare.**
- **Boarders have access to a range and choice of activities.**
- **Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school.**
- **The operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare.**
- **Boarders receive personal support from staff.**

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.3)

There should be clear management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding in the school.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 2

Since the last welfare inspection the school had restructured its management arrangements and now had one of the housemasters appointed as a Head of Boarding, below the Head and deputy, to oversee and co-ordinate the school's adherence to the National Minimum Standards. In combination with the general pastoral oversight offered by the deputy Head, and the contributions made by other parts of the school's management structure, inspectors felt there was satisfactory overall monitoring and management of boarding welfare matters.

A formal meeting between the Head and housemasters took place each week to discuss boarding issues supplemented by a more informal weekly supper to discuss matters of mutual interest in relation to boarding and its development. Both meetings were minuted. On a more day to day basis inspectors saw repeated examples of emerging welfare issues being appropriately discussed by the senior staff team and being promptly addressed.

Good attention was also being paid to planning for the introduction of girls at a younger age in the school, both in relation to pragmatic accommodation issues and the curricular and practice development that would be needed to adequately meet the different welfare demands posed by this group of pupils.

Inspectors welcomed the development of the Head of Boarding role but questioned whether this role was being fully utilised. The current role appeared focused largely on 'bricks and mortar' issues; the inspectors' view was however that this post offered an opportunity for much broader oversight and consistent development of boarding welfare practice beyond environmental concerns, particularly at a challenging time for the school, as it develops its co-educational facilities. The interface between this role and that of the senior housemaster, who had a representative and co-ordinating role in respect of housemasters and was a member of the school's Senior Management Team (SMT), was also one inspectors did not fully understand and felt held some potential for conflict or confusion. The school was therefore advised to consider further development of the Head of Boarding role, whilst remaining cognisant of the extra work this would bring, so the feasibility of managing the role alongside full housemaster and academic responsibilities would need to be carefully looked at. Should the role be expanded, consideration should also be given to inclusion of the Head of Boarding on the SMT of the school.

Housemasters had appropriate levels of experience in boarding practice, typically having been at the school for a period at more junior levels of house responsibility, and they were expected to undergo the relevant BSA training for this role. Inspectors were impressed by the commitment to, and understanding of their role, demonstrated by the housemasters and housemistresses interviewed in the course of the inspection.

Inspectors were, however, concerned about the apparent lack of direct input and monitoring by the governing body around boarding welfare issues. While, through membership of various committees, governors had sight of relevant statistical and financial information provided by the school pertinent to aspects of boarding development, there was no formal system of boarding welfare monitoring by this body in place. Neither did governors carry out visits to boarding houses to talk to staff or pupils directly to gain their opinions and to

observe practice and boarding environments for themselves. This is an area of practice that needed considered development on the part of the governing body so that they feel confident they have a good direct and independent grasp of the reality of boarding welfare arrangements.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.3)

The school should be capable of satisfactorily managing crises affecting boarders' welfare

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school had appropriate systems and procedures in place to manage foreseeable emergencies arising from pupil's welfare needs, or from environmental matters. Inspectors saw evidence of effective management of a recent meningitis situation; past crises in boarding management had also been handled promptly and sensitively, whilst ensuring continuity of care for boarders. The school's extensive bursary department had procedures in place for responding to the not infrequent frailties of the more elderly aspects of the school's infrastructure, temporary heating breakdowns being a not uncommon phenomenon, and other potential environmental crises.

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.5)

The organisation of boarding houses or units should operate satisfactorily and provide appropriate protection and separation of boarders by age and gender.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The overall organisation of the boarding houses was satisfactory. Inspectors did not identify any major or inappropriate discrepancies in boarding practice between houses, outside of the subtle variations one would expect emanating from the particular style of the housemasters or housemistresses concerned. While pupils could identify particular characteristics of each house this was not expressed in terms of any house being particularly unpleasant or neglectful of welfare needs.

In terms of physical accommodation significant differences did still exist between the various house in terms of the quality and suitability of design. These differences were largely dictated by the age of the older boarding houses, although more detail on what inspectors considered addressable shortfalls are noted later in this report. As a consequence newer, purpose-designed houses, such as Bruce and the 6th form girls' accommodation, still contrasted with the quality and range of facilities in older houses. The school was aware of the inconsistencies in accommodation standards and much money and effort had initially gone into repair of the underlying physical infrastructure, for example the new water supply, fire safety systems, window replacement etc. Future significant expenditure will continue to be needed to bring the internal décor, furniture and fittings up to, and maintained at, a more consistent standard across the board. The planned building of brand new accommodation to cope with the increased boarding capacity at the school will emphasise the contrast between new and old even more starkly.

In the context of the less than ideal design of the older buildings the school did pay appropriate attention to separation of boarding facilities by sex, and as far as was reasonably possible, by age. Each house accommodated pupils from all years with, of course, the girls' houses covering only sixth form ages. Each house has separate areas for younger pupils to study and dorm, kitchen, toilet and bathroom facilities were allocated for younger and older age groups, although the layout of the older houses, particularly those in the main Stowe House, made the boundaries around these nominally separate areas somewhat fluid; younger pupils did not however indicate any significant or inappropriate intrusion into their areas by older pupils.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.6)

There should be an appropriate range and choice of activities for boarders outside teaching time.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The pupil questionnaire results indicated that around 73% of pupils rated the range of activities at the school as either good or very good. Inspectors similarly judged that there was a generally good range of activities available to pupils, covering an impressive range of sporting, artistic and cultural opportunities. The typical school week was in fact very structured and busy for pupils, with a combination of lessons, prep and commitments to various societies and sporting events.

The boarding houses had a range of in-house entertainment and recreational resources such as pool tables, TV, video and DVD and access to computers. Most of the older pupils supplemented this with their own audio and computer equipment, books, games and pastimes. Sixth formers had access to their own club on-site.

The school was alert to the dangers posed by internet access and appropriate software monitoring and safeguarding systems were in place via the school's computer network. Staff were also alert to the possibilities of the importing of inappropriate material on pupil laptops from home settings.

There were short periods of free time in weekday evenings between and around prep sessions. Free time was also available at weekends on Saturday afternoons, if not involved in sports events, and Sundays after Chapel. Some younger pupils and their parents were concerned about the relative lack of organised activities and outings at weekends, particularly for non-sporting pupils. This was something the school was aware of, particularly in anticipation of increasing numbers of younger pupils of both sexes, and more effort was now being put into organising trips out by individual houses. This was confirmed in feedback from younger pupils during the inspection.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.2)**Boarders have opportunity to contribute views to the operation of boarding provision.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

There were a variety of mechanisms in place for the obtaining of pupils' views on boarding. At the more formal end of the spectrum the Stoic Council was the main pupil representative body that focused on all aspects of the running of the school, including boarding welfare matters. Stoic Council members interviewed during the inspection felt it was an effective body and that pupil views raised were listened, if not always acceded, to. The improvement of organised Sunday activities was cited as an example of pupil-led change initiated via the Council.

Pupil views were also sought on specific issues such as food, and a food committee was in place with reps across the various age groups. Occasional pupil surveys were also undertaken, again on food issues, and also on matters like bullying for the younger years at the school. Individual house meetings also offered opportunities for pupils to raise matters of concern.

At a more informal and individual level inspectors gained the impression from feedback from staff and pupils, and from observation of staff pupil interaction, that direct and open communication between individual pupils and staff was positively encouraged. As already noted the Head was seen as a generally approachable figure with whom pupils could raise issues and concerns directly.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.7)**Any prefect system (or equivalent) should give prefects (or equivalent) appropriate specific duties and responsibilities, with adequate staff supervision and measures to counter possible abuses of the role.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

The school had a well established school prefect system in place. The roles, responsibilities and powers of school prefects were well defined and a thorough process of induction and preparation was in place. This involved input from the senior master, who maintained oversight of prefect support and performance, and from the school's counsellor. Regular meetings were held with the prefect body by the senior master, who was seen by the sample of prefects interviewed to provide good ongoing support and guidance as well as expectations of high standards of performance.

Prefects did not have authority to directly issue formal sanctions but could propose such actions, subject to the approval of teaching staff. Feedback from pupil questionnaires reflected a low level of complaint about perceived officiousness on the part of some prefects but no serious concerns about abuses of power.

The prefects interviewed and observed during the course of the inspection impressed with their understanding of the role and the conscientiousness and fairness with which they exercised their authority.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.6)

Each boarder should have one or more members of staff to whom he or she can turn for personal guidance or with a personal problem.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

Feedback from pupils in discussion and from questionnaires indicated they had a good range of people within the school from whom they could seek advice and support on both academic and welfare matters. Positive feedback on the quality of support offered to pupils in a variety of difficult personal situations was also received from a number of parents.

A formal system of house-based personal tutor support was in place for the younger years at the school, which pupils indicated worked well. Older pupils could be more selective in the staff they sought support from. Pupils were, however, generally free to approach whomsoever they felt most comfortable with, either within the school's teaching and house staff teams or more broadly in the school setting. This typically included house matrons, housemasters and their partners, the school chaplain and not least the school's counsellor, whom pupils could arrange to see directly without the leave of staff. Inspectors were also impressed with the quality and regularity of information sharing and discussion by staff in both formal and informal settings over pupils experiencing welfare problems.

The school counsellor was seen to offer a particularly valuable and well-used service that the school had recognised would need expansion to cope with the demands of a bigger pupil population. Although the school counsellor met with all new school entrants, discussion with a group of younger pupils did indicate a marked lack of awareness of her role and means of direct access. This support therefore may warrant more regular highlighting to younger pupils.

While the school did have a counsellor she clearly did not see herself in the role of an independent listener, due to her immersion in the structure of the school, and inspectors therefore discussed with senior staff the potential value of re-establishing this additional role for someone more independent, outside the school structure, to whom pupils could refer if necessary. As already noted some clarification of the CSCI role in relation to concerns/complaints was needed.

WELFARE SUPPORT TO BOARDERS

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- **Boarders receive first aid and health care as necessary.**
- **Boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill.**
- **Boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal problems.**
- **Boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination.**
- **Boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families.**
- **Boarders' possessions and money are protected.**
- **New boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in.**
- **Boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school.**
- **Risk assessment and school record keeping contribute to boarders' welfare.**
- **Boarders receive good quality catering provision.**
- **Boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals.**
- **Boarders are protected from the risk of fire.**
- **Boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands.**
- **The welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school.**
- **Boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high-risk activities.**
- **Boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school.**

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.14)

Appropriate first aid and minor illness treatment are available to boarders at all times, with access to medical, dental and optical services as required.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 2

The medical and health care needs of boarders were satisfactorily met by an on-site sanatorium that was staffed 24 hrs a day by a team of qualified nurses. The sanatorium was well supported by the local GP practice, with whom all boarders were registered. Two doctors from the practice offered daily surgeries at the school. Appropriate choice of male and female doctors was available and pupils could choose to see doctors alone if they wished. Planned access to dental and optical services was more typically arranged by parents in holiday periods, but services local to the school would be used if necessary on an emergency basis. Through the sanatorium there was also access to physiotherapy and podiatry services and, if required, and usually in liaison with parents, referral to more specialist local health services would be made through GP referral.

Minor illness advice and treatment was offered by the nursing staff at the sanatorium or, if really minor by matrons in the boarding houses.

While the overall feedback from pupils and parents was positive about the service offered by the sanatorium, inspectors did receive comment from a number of older pupils about being treated unsympathetically by some of the nursing staff at the sanatorium when presenting as unwell, to the extent that some said they would rather not go, and simply endure the symptoms of their illness instead. This was brought to the attention of the school to investigate further.

A particular incident where a pupil under supervision in the sanatorium had subsequently developed a serious condition was brought to the attention of inspectors. As the school was still in the process of resolving a complaint about this incident it was not separately investigated by inspectors, however initial discussion with one of the GPs indicated that it was unlikely the sanatorium staff could have been seen as being negligent in this case.

A good system for recording health care needs and medical treatment given to pupils was maintained via the Apollo system, in addition to the NHS records maintained on site by the GPs. Records of administration of medication did however require attention. These were largely maintained by matrons in the boarding houses and inspectors noted inconsistencies in the detail and accuracy of these records; for example failures to note time, dosage strength and reason for administration.

Inspectors were also concerned about a lack of clarity over the responsibility for assessing pupils' ability to safely self-administer and store medication in boarding houses. While senior staff told inspectors school procedures indicated this was a matronal responsibility, discussion with matrons indicated they were often unaware of what medication may have been prescribed for individual pupils by the sanatorium and did not formally assess pupils' abilities in this area. Inspectors advised seeking advice and training input for matrons and any other staff administering medication from a pharmacist on current good practice on medication administration and record keeping, and a review of procedures for self-administration assessments.

Appropriate parental permissions were sought for administration of first aid and non-

prescribed medications as part of school admission procedures. Matrons were first aid trained, as were a number of key staff responsible for sporting activities; such activities were also supported by the attendance of nursing staff.

An incident where an on field sports injury was felt to have been handled inappropriately was brought to the attention of inspectors. In discussion with senior school staff it was clear that, while staff had evidently acted in what they thought were the best interests of the child concerned, the errors in this case had been recognised and school procedures changed accordingly and all relevant staff reminded of the appropriate steps to take when dealing with potentially serious sports injuries.

While treatment as the result of accidents or injuries was appropriately recorded on individual health records where pupils may have had sanatorium input and treatment, there appeared to be a lack of overall monitoring and analysis of accidents and injuries suffered by pupils, exacerbated by the fact that separate and specific record-keeping on accidents appeared limited to those suffered by staff or visitors on the school site. Recording and monitoring systems needed review to address this shortfall.

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.3)

Boarders who are ill should be regularly checked and adequately looked after by a member of staff, and be able to summon staff assistance readily and rapidly when necessary.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Pupils suffering short-term periods of illness that did not warrant a return home could be accommodated in the sanatorium, which had scope to care for up to 17 pupils. Some of the boarding houses had scope for less seriously ill pupils to temporarily use accommodation adjacent to matrons' flats.

The supervision offered by the latter arrangement was satisfactory. Staffing cover by the nurses on duty in the sanatorium would however, in the opinion of inspectors be very stretched if the sanatorium were full, given the other demands on nurses time to support GP surgeries and run clinics. There was also an absence of any call bell system to alert the nurse on duty if she were busy elsewhere in the sanatorium. As the school was about to undertake a review of sanatorium services inspectors advised a careful analysis of the adequacy of nursing cover in the light of the current range of responsibilities undertaken and consideration of the installation of some form of call bell system.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.8)

Significant health and personal problems of individual boarders should be identified and managed appropriately.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Overall inspectors judged that health and personal problems of boarders were well managed by boarding staff and this was confirmed in much of the feedback from parents.

Good support was provided for pupils with chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes and eating disorders, and pupils confirmed that issues such as homesickness and bedwetting were sensitively managed in the houses. Staff were alert to pupils undergoing stress in either school or home settings and, as noted earlier, the generally good level of communication around the school ensured early warning signs were picked up and shared promptly with key staff. Support and guidance for distressed pupils was primarily provided through tutor and house staff systems with access, as already noted, to the on-site school counsellor if required. Local child psychology and psychiatric services could also be accessed via the GPs if required. Good sensitive support was also offered for pupils with learning difficulties by the Skills Development tutor.

The school site was not generally suitable for children with mobility problems but suitable long-term adaptations had been made for one such pupil and satisfactory temporary arrangements had been put in place for one further pupil recovering from an operation that had limited his mobility. The parent of this child was particularly complimentary about the efforts put in by the school and sanatorium staff on his behalf.

One area that needed improvement however was the detail held on welfare plans for pupils with identified welfare needs. While it was clear in talking with staff that much verbal information was shared, and acted upon consistently, written records in houses for pupils with significant welfare needs needed to be more explicit about those needs, how they would be met, by whom and any associated actions required e.g. for additional risk assessments or contingency plans in case of crisis.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.6)

Within the school, there is no inappropriate discrimination on grounds of gender, disability, race, religion, cultural background, linguistic background, sexual orientation, or academic or sporting ability. These factors are taken into account in the care of boarders, so that care is sensitive to different needs.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school had a clear commitment in its written policies to the promotion of equal opportunities and the countering of discrimination. Inspectors saw no evidence of overt discriminatory practice or attitudes on the part of staff or pupils and no serious concerns were raised in this area in pupil questionnaires or parental feedback. There was however, as mentioned earlier, comment by overseas and minority ethnic children of occasional teasing and taunting about names, accents and countries of origin, which the school will need to ensure is addressed. Good support was provided for pupils who did not have English as a first language.

In welfare terms there appeared to be balanced and fair treatment of both sexes, although some comment was received about the relative lack of opportunities in girls' sports, compared to boys, which the school will need to ensure is addressed as and when the female population grows.

Good attention was paid to the needs of individuals who did not readily 'fit in' and examples were seen of careful and considered support and integration by housemasters for such pupils. For example one pupil whose leisure interests put him at odds with some other pupils was carefully introduced to pupils in other houses with similar interests who were able to support him and develop his confidence. Another boy whose behaviour and presentation put him at odds with his peers was allocated a bedroom in an area with more senior boys, who were more able to cope with and moderate his behaviours.

Although not strictly within the remit of this standard inspectors did meet the two girls currently attending the school on a day basis in the 3rd form, trailblazers for the future intake of girls below sixth form age. While clearly resilient and confident in their own right it was reassuring to note they did feel well supported and integrated within the school, given their potential sense of isolation.

As noted earlier the school did make explicit its underlying Christian ethos and attendant expectation that pupils attend Chapel regularly. Where pupils from different faiths had a genuine wish to attend alternative services the chaplain confirmed that this would be arranged. The school did not currently have any separate prayer facilities for Muslim children but the chaplain again confirmed that as and when required this would be provided.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.6)

Boarders are enabled to contact their parents and families in private.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Pupils were able to contact their parents and families in private by an appropriate variety of means including letter, telephone (fixed and mobile) and email.

Fixed telephone lines were available in each boarding house but the use of these had been largely overtaken by the increasing proliferation of mobile phones. The current combination of mobile and fixed phone access was seen by inspectors to be satisfactory. Information on helpline numbers for pupils was provided in pupil handbooks.

Each of the houses had a slightly different policy on mobile phone access, which caused some degree of dissent and disquiet amongst pupils, to judge from questionnaire responses. While the school is clearly right to put limits on usage, particularly for younger pupils, some greater degree of consistency on minimum periods of mobile phone access outside of school lesson and prep time was advised by inspectors to ensure some degree of parity across boarding houses.

Each pupil had their own private email account at the school, which they could use freely to communicate with parents and family unless exceptional welfare situations dictated otherwise.

Sampling of pupil files in houses showed good evidence of prompt and detailed communication by the school to parents when significant welfare concerns arose. This also was confirmed in feedback from a number of parents.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.3)

Reasonable protection is provided for boarders' personal possessions and for any boarders' money or valuables looked after by the school.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

There were appropriate systems in place for the storage and distribution of any monies pupils gave to staff for safekeeping and inspectors were informed the records were subject to audit by the Bursary.

Secure storage space for personal possessions was somewhat limited especially for younger boys in the dorms and inspectors saw numerous lockers 'stuffed to the gills' with a variety of sporting equipment and personal possessions.

The school had however additionally provided lap top 'safes' for each pupil to securely store laptops and associated computer equipment. Some of the smaller shared and single bedrooms available to pupils could be locked, but not all. Provision of locks for all the smaller rooms would be a step forward in promoting security.

A significant level of comment was received from pupils and parents about theft at the school and staff confirmed there had been reported thefts, leading to the involvement of the police. However inspectors noted during tours of accommodation pupils taking very little care of their own possessions with laptops, iPods and other expensive items left lying around rooms, often with ground floor windows left open. Reminders to pupils of their own responsibilities for their property would not go amiss.

On the other hand inspectors also noted a number of access doors to boarding houses left propped open during morning cleaning routines, which compromised building security. This needed addressing by the school with cleaning staff.

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.3)

There is an appropriate process of induction and guidance for new boarders.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The school had good systems in place for the induction of pupils. Opportunities were provided for the main intake of new boarders to visit the school in the summer prior to autumn term commencement to become familiar with the layout and routines of the school. New 6th form girls also had the opportunity to arrive at school the weekend prior to term commencing to settle in.

An appropriate range of information was provided via a combination of personal diaries and handbooks for pupils covering all key aspects of initial information. Inspectors also saw good examples of additional information booklets provided by individual houses. Arrangements were in place for all new boarders to meet the school counsellor for an explanation of her role and to discuss any early problems arising.

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.4)

Any guardians appointed by the school should be subject to the same recruitment checks as staff, and their care of pupils should be monitored.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

9

The school did not currently appoint educational guardians and therefore this standard was not inspected on this occasion.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.4)

The Head, or a senior member of the school's staff, regularly monitors the school's records of risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents, to identify any issues requiring action.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

There were a variety of systems in place for monitoring and analysis of a range of key records by senior staff in the school although formal evidence of that monitoring and any conclusions drawn was lacking. The most evident and effective systems were those for analysing punishments as overseen by the senior master. The Bursar clarified that risk assessments were overseen by senior Bursary staff and reviewed by the health and safety consultants used by the school. Records of complaints were informally monitored by the Head. As already noted accident recording and reporting was patchy.

Inspectors recommended that the school needed to review and consolidate its arrangements for monitoring and analysis of all the areas listed under Appendix 3 to the standards and produce tangible written evidence of the outcome of monitoring undertaken.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

Meals should be provided to boarders, which are adequate in quantity, quality and choice, and provision is made for special dietary, medical or religious needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The meals and food provided at the school were subject to much criticism in pupil questionnaires, with 53% finding it poor or very poor, and in parent letters. Inspectors however judged that the quality, range and standard of food was more than acceptable given the scale of the catering operation at the school. This was based on the sampling of a number of meals over the course of the inspection and examination of menu plans. Direct discussion with pupils identified that breakfast and lunches were generally popular and that any dissatisfaction that did exist was usually in relation to the evening meal, which had more limited choice but in the inspectors' view was still satisfactory.

Inspectors were impressed with the efforts of catering staff to elicit the views of pupils through the food committee, surveys and visits to boarding houses and to develop menus in line with their preferences, whilst maintaining a good emphasis on healthy eating. Due account was taken of particular dietary needs arising from cultural, religious or health reasons. Good vegetarian options were available.

The serving and eating environment was however lacking in appeal, with crowding in the corridor queues and the servery area quickly becoming messy and unattractive in the course of meal serving, as did the plate return and scraps disposal area. The actual dining hall areas were also rather old-fashioned in the continued use of large tables and benches. The school was considering upgrading the provision for serving and crockery return and inspectors would strongly support this as part of moves to improve the overall ambience of mealtimes, along with improvements to the ambience of the actual dining area and queuing arrangements.

The main school kitchens had recently been fully upgraded to a very high standard and there were no outstanding environmental health office recommendations. Catering staff were appropriately experienced and trained in food handling and hygiene.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.5)

Boarders have access to drinking water in both boarding and teaching areas, and to food or the means of preparing food at reasonable times in addition to main meals.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

There was appropriate access to drinking water outlets and drinks machines in the main school building and boarding houses. Outside of the main meals provided in the dining hall pupils had access to fresh fruit, bread and spreads provided by the school in all of the houses. House matrons were also noted to provide a range of additional treats and snacks.

Pupils could bring in non-perishable food of their own to prepare in house kitchens or purchase sweets, drinks, pasta and noodle based snacks from the school shop. Inspectors did however receive comment from a number of staff and parents questioning the health impact of the ease of access to these less balanced and monitored sources of food.

Inspectors were concerned at the state of some of the kitchens in the boarding houses. Despite the best efforts of cleaning staff pupils were often leaving these in a dirty state and out of date food and drinks was found in some of the fridges and storage cupboards. There also did not seem to be any systems for ensuring fridges were operating at correct temperatures. The scope for food-based infections was considerable and inspectors recommended that better attention be paid to ensuring these kitchen areas are kept clean and hygienic.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Boarders and boarding staff should be aware of emergency evacuation procedures from boarding accommodation. The school should comply with recommendations of the Fire Service, and should regularly carry out and record risk assessments in relation to fire, together with fire drills and any routine tests recommended by the Fire Service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The school had very good and regular liaison with the local fire authority due to the high potential fire risk attached to the school related to its age and number of pupils accommodated. Since the last full welfare inspection the fire detection system had been fully upgraded at considerable cost.

The school's fire risk assessment was updated annually in liaison with the local fire authority, which carried out an annual fire safety exercise at the school. Regular fire systems tests and drills were held. Fire detection and fire fighting equipment was subject to regular maintenance checks. Pupils spoken with on some of the house tours confirmed evening/nighttime drills were occasionally held and they were familiar with fire evacuation routines. There were no outstanding fire authority recommendations.

Inspectors were however concerned to note during the course of the inspection the regular and prolonged propping open of designated fire doors, both within the main school and in boarding houses. While this was often done to aid repeated access to certain areas, or to facilitate staff supervision of boarding areas, any such propping does compromise fire safety. Where the retention of fire doors in an open position is considered genuinely necessary the school, in liaison with the fire authority, needs to establish safe ways of doing this, for example by the use of electro-magnetic retainers linked to the fire alarm system.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

Schools where there are unusual or especially onerous demands on boarders ensure that these are appropriate to the boarders concerned and do not unacceptably affect boarders' welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

While pupils were undoubtedly kept busy at Stowe by a combination of academic, sporting and leisure pursuits, inspectors did not feel this resulted in the imposition of particularly onerous or unusual demands upon them. There was scope for relaxation and free time, especially at weekends, and inspectors were also reassured that the good level of staff monitoring and communication around pupil welfare would quickly pick up any pupils who were struggling because of a build up of academic or extra-curricular demands.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.2)

The welfare of any children accommodated at the school, other than pupils, is protected.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

9

Although the school accommodation was at times used by other groups of children they were not being accommodated by the school itself. This standard therefore did not apply at this time.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.6)

Identifiably high-risk activities provided for boarders should be competently supervised and accompanied by adequate and appropriate safety measures.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

There were generally appropriate systems in place to address the risks arising from activities undertaken by pupils both on and off site. Samples of good risk assessments were seen for example in relation to cadet and rifle club activities on and off-site and more mundane activities such as outings to local community resources or events in London.

Inspectors also however noted that despite the drawing up of good generic risk assessments, for example for transporting pupils in minibuses or coaches, much repetition of such assessments was taking place on each subsequent occasion, which was unnecessarily time consuming and probably frustrating for staff leading no doubt to the more flippant risk identified (hunger on a coach trip for example). Some tidying up of processes and wider use of the good generic assessments was advised.

Risk assessments were primarily undertaken or overseen by two senior staff members who had received appropriate training in this area and risk assessments relating to more high risk activities, for example, for trips abroad were monitored via senior staff and the governing body. Appropriate separate permission was sought from parents around high risk activities and complexities of insurance cover addressed in trip pre-planning.

Inspectors did note however on occasions in the past risk assessments for trips and activities had been drawn up and countersigned by the same senior member of staff. Systems should be reviewed to ensure appropriate countersigning and verification by different staff take place consistently.

Inspectors also advised that clearer identification should be made on documentation for trips involving specialist activities provided by another agency (e.g. canoeing or rock climbing) of the qualifications/licence etc held by the staff or agency concerned. The current simple tick box was insufficient.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.5)

Boarders have access to information about events in the world outside the school, and access to local facilities, which is appropriate to their age.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Pupils had ready access to a wide range of information about events in the outside world via their access to the internet, television and newspapers and periodicals available in the school library.

Clear guidelines were in place to govern pupil access to the local town of Buckingham. Older pupils were allowed access on their own whereas younger pupils had to be in groups. Permission to go off site was subject to approval by house staff and good monitoring was maintained of pupils' comings and goings and their whereabouts on-site again by house registers and signing in and out books, aided again by the Apollo system.

Use was made of local community facilities from time to time as part of school curricular and extra-curricular activities. Good attention was paid to staffing cover and the potential risks in such activities.

Community service projects were undertaken by older pupils and these were subject to appropriate assessment and monitoring by staff.

STAFFING

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- **Boarders are adequately supervised by staff.**
- **Staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site.**
- **Boarders are adequately supervised at night.**
- **Boarders are looked after by staff with specific boarding duties, with adequate induction and continued training.**
- **Boarders are looked after by staff following clear boarding policies and practice.**
- **There are sound relationships between staff and boarders.**
- **Boarders' personal privacy is respected.**
- **There is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders.**
- **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.**

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.7)

The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time should be sufficient in number and deployment for the age, number and needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Inspectors judged that the level of staffing cover provided at the school for time outside of lessons and organised activities was generally satisfactory and no concerns were raised by staff or pupils in this regard.

Each house had a resident housemaster, under housemaster and matron, supported by attached tutorial staff who undertook boarding house duties on a rota basis. Typically staffing cover in boarding houses during evenings/weekends consisted of two to three staff, usually the housemaster or under housemaster, supported by the house matron and attached staff, and activities outside of the houses in different parts of the school were suitably supervised, given the age and abilities of the pupils concerned. There was also a reasonable degree of expectation that pupils appointed as house officers would exercise appropriate supervision and responsibility for the safe and smooth running of the life of the house alongside house staff. Temporary staff absences appeared to be effectively covered by other house staff as and when required.

One observation made by inspectors was the considerable time demands attendant upon the role of housemaster/housemistress, especially when academic and other work commitments were taken into account. While this did not appear to be currently affecting the exercise of any house or welfare related responsibilities inspectors felt that the school needed to be mindful of the consequent pressure on these positions, particularly as a generation of younger post holders are taken on who may have family commitments as well. In this context inspectors queried whether there was scope in the future to develop the role of under housemaster to more fully share some of those responsibilities taken on by housemasters.

During house visits conducted by inspectors pupils were always able to find/contact staff when they needed and proactive staff supervision/oversight of pupil activities in the different parts of houses was satisfactory.

The houses with more spread out structures such as Cobham, with several separate buildings around a quadrangle, or those in the main Stowe House, did present more of a challenge to effective supervision but again pupils did not raise any concerns and could swiftly locate staff as and when needed.

There was an appropriate mix of gender in the house staff teams with due regard paid to careful management of male presence in the girls' houses.

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.5)
Boarders temporarily away from the school site remain under the overall responsibility of a duty member of staff, and are able to contact a member of staff in an emergency.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Appropriate arrangements were in place for pupils' supervision off site as evidenced in risk assessments seen and from discussions with staff and pupils. As already noted pupils' whereabouts were well tracked by systems in houses and by the use of the Apollo system which in combination should enable swift identification of any pupils unauthorised absence.		

Standard 33 (33.1 - 33.5)
Staff should be present, and accessible to boarders as necessary, in each boarding house at night.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Inspectors judged there was a good level of nighttime supervision and/or access in boarding houses with typically three staff sleeping-in in appropriately accessible but separate accommodation within boarding houses. No concerns were raised about nighttime supervision by any pupils or staff.		

Standard 34 (34.1 - 34.7)

All staff with boarding duties have job descriptions reflecting those duties, receive induction training in boarding when newly appointed, and receive regular review of their boarding practice, with opportunities for continuing training in boarding.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The school had job descriptions in place for all key boarding posts, the most detailed and appropriate of which was that for the matron position. Inspectors advised review of other boarding duty job descriptions to ensure their accuracy and relevance and in particular to include indication of to whom the post holder was responsible in relation to exercise of boarding duties.

There was general guidance in place covering the role of housemasters' spouses, which made clear there was no obligation to become involved in the life of the boarding house, so the degree of involvement was largely a matter of individual negotiation and preference. While recognising this point inspectors nonetheless advised that where such roles did, by choice, become more substantial there should be written clarification of the extent of the responsibilities undertaken.

Staff with boarding responsibilities were subject to formal regular appraisal of their performance in these areas via the school's Review and Professional Development (RPD) system. Ongoing supervision of boarding staff was managed through largely informal means by line managers unless formal disciplinary action was for any reason required.

A process for induction for boarding staff was in place, including briefing on child protection matters; this overall process was however not formalised and recorded on staff files, to ensure clarity on what staff had or had not been informed about. Inspectors were also concerned that feedback from matrons indicated they did not have a formal induction and largely picked matters up from existing matrons or housemasters rather than following a formal and agreed induction programme reinforcing some of the earlier points about diverse practice in medication administration. Inspectors therefore recommended the introduction of more formal recorded induction programmes across the board.

On the training front formal BSA training for the housemaster role was made available where not already undertaken and as already noted specific child protection training had also been provided for this tier of boarding staff. Gradual introduction to the role was possible where housemasters were promoted internally

Child protection training and other keys issues were addressed through Inset training opportunities and occasional additional training on specific subjects was also made available; training on management of eating disorders was one example that had been on offer shortly before this inspection.

Standard 35 (35.1 - 35.4)
All staff with boarding duties are provided with up to date written guidance on the school's boarding policies and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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The school had comprehensive written guidance in place for teaching staff and an additional handbook for housemasters. Between the two sets of guidance all key areas of practice were addressed covering as appropriate academic, pastoral and staff personnel matters.

The one minor shortfall in the view of inspectors was the lack of specific written guidance for matrons on the expectations of, and how to, carry out their role. While there was inevitably some overlap with existing policy and guidance handbooks inspectors felt there would be real benefit in developing a specific 'matron' volume to ensure consistency of practice; the inconsistencies in respect of medication recording and management of self-administration were cases in point and a reference handbook might minimise or avoid the ambiguities posed by the current system of passing on received knowledge from previous postholders.

Standard 36 (36.1 - 36.4)
There are sound staff/boarder relationships.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
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Pupil questionnaire feedback and interviews with groups of pupils confirmed the view of inspectors gained during time at the school that relationships between staff and boarders, allowing for the inevitable occasional conflict and differences of opinion, were very positive.

Observed contact between staff and pupils was conducted in a generally considerate, fair and friendly manner, whilst maintaining appropriate boundaries of authority and respect. Observed staff approaches to pupils were positive and not overly officious or authoritarian. Disagreements were seen to be handled in a reasonable and considered manner by boarding staff.

Inspectors did not observe, and neither was comment made to them about, any inappropriate favouritism or antipathy towards particular groups or individuals.

Standard 37 (37.1 - 37.2)
Staff supervision of boarders should avoid intruding unnecessarily on boarders' privacy.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Inspectors' observations confirmed that staff managed the direct supervision of boarding areas in an appropriately sensitive manner that did not intrude upon pupils' privacy. Given the age of the pupil group they were largely expected to manage basic routines such as dressing, undressing showering etc themselves minimising the need for staff presence at these times.

Standard 38 (38.1 - 38.10)

Recruitment of all staff (including ancillary staff and those on a contractual/sessional basis) and volunteers who work with boarders (as defined in the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000) includes checks through the Criminal Records Bureau checking system (enhanced as appropriate), with a satisfactory outcome. There is a satisfactory recruitment process recorded in writing.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 1

Inspectors identified a number of weaknesses with recruitment practice that needed to be urgently addressed.

While the various staff responsible for recruitment were able to describe to inspectors the steps that would be generally undertaken for the appointment and vetting of academic and boarding and manual staff it was surprising to note the lack of a definitive and comprehensive written recruitment policy document that clearly outlined the necessary steps and procedures as they applied to the differing sets of staff in the school as a framework for ensuring consistency of recruitment practice. Inspectors recommended this be drawn up.

Inspectors also noted that recruitment responsibilities were spread across a number of staff both on the academic/pastoral and on the bursarial sides of operations. Unsurprisingly in this context, and in the absence of a clear policy and procedure framework, gaps and inconsistencies were noted when measured against the expectations of this standard. There was also a lack of realisation by the school that exactly the same steps of vetting and checking needed to be applied to **all** staff working at the school whether full time, temporary, peripatetic, administrative or ancillary staff.

The appointment process and records for permanently appointed academic and boarding staff were generally acceptable, although clearer evidencing of the telephone follow-up of references and the recording of interviews and outcomes was needed. However the process for sessional or specialist peripatetic staff was less satisfactory, with examples seen with evidence only of satisfactory CRB clearance having been undertaken and none in relation to the other recruitment vetting under this standard. One member of staff, initially temporarily appointed to supervise sporting activities, had subsequently been appointed on a permanent contract but had started that before any references had been taken up.

With regard to administrative and ancillary staff, although CRB checks were appropriately being taken up, evidence of references was patchy and further steps, such as record of interview, telephone confirmation of references etc as outlined under this standard, were not in place.

The school was due to employ an experienced personnel staff member in the Bursary. This struck inspectors as an ideal opportunity to review current recruitment practice and draw up definitive policy and guidance that ensured all areas of recruitment were conducted in an appropriately thorough and consistent manner for all staff employed at the school. The development of more in depth recruitment checklist that could be completed and then signed off by different staff was also suggested.

Inspectors were asked whether longer standing staff appointed before the requirement to have CRB checks in place should now be checked through that system. Although this is not a statutory expectation, as a matter of good practice the school was advised to set this in

motion.

Within the limitations noted above appropriate attention was paid to the vetting of resident non-employed staff living on the school premises and to the checking of Gap students. The school was clear that no one would start work at the school without satisfactory evidence of CRB clearance.

The school itself only used taxi firms who had been able to reassure the school about CRB checking having been undertaken, although standard level CRB clearance was in fact part of licensing requirement for local taxi firms and drivers. The school had less control of situations where older pupils might book taxis themselves if approved companies were for any reason not available.

Standard 39 (39.1 - 39.4)

The school does not allow any member of staff (including ancillary staff, sessional/contract staff and volunteers) to work unsupervised with boarders unless that member of staff has been satisfactorily checked with the Criminal Records Bureau.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

As noted above the school was clear about its responsibilities to ensure no staff without appropriate CRB clearance had unsupervised access to pupils. Any extensive maintenance or improvement works required in boarding houses and undertaken by external contractors, was wherever possible, scheduled for times when the school was on holiday to minimise possible unsupervised contact with pupils. Wherever this was unavoidable suitable arrangements were in place to supervise the workers concerned. If longer-term work in houses during term-time was required Bursary staff indicated CRB checks would be required of those external staff. An example was the planned painting work in houses for which the engaged team of painters would undergo CRB checking.

Extensive external restoration work was underway at the time of this inspection, undertaken by external contractors who had not been CRB cleared. The nature and location of the work however did not provide any significant opportunity for unsupervised contact with pupils and Bursary staff indicated that contractors had been made fully aware of the need for appropriate conduct by their staff on site.

Some concerns were raised by school-employed maintenance staff that arrangements to ensure they were appropriately 'chaperoned' by female staff when working in the girls' boarding houses were not operating consistently. This should be looked into by the school.

Written guidance was in place for non-employed staff living in boarding accommodation making clear the expectations of their conduct, and that of any visitors, and the requirement for notification of any convictions.

PREMISES

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- **Boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation.**
- **Boarders have their own accommodation, secure from public intrusion.**
- **Boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation.**
- **Boarders have satisfactory provision to study.**
- **Boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities.**
- **Boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day.**
- **Boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas.**
- **Boarders are protected from safety hazards.**
- **Boarders are suitably accommodated when ill.**
- **Boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered.**
- **Boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school.**
- **The welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted.**
- **The welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits.**

Standard 40 (40.1 - 40.8)

Boarding Houses (including dormitories and living areas) and other accommodation provided for boarders should be appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, suitably furnished, accessible to any boarders with disabilities, and adequately maintained.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 2

As already noted in this report the range of boarding accommodation at Stowe differed significantly in terms of age, design, space and quality. Since the last welfare inspection much work and expense had gone into improvement of more 'invisible' infrastructure improvements on areas such as a new mains water supply, upgrading of fire safety equipment, roofing repairs and a rolling programme of window replacement was underway. Major improvements had also been made to bathroom and toilet facilities in some of the older houses. Major redevelopment of the girls' current boarding houses was also in hand to cope with the imminent influx of younger girls, pending the building of brand new accommodation. Inspectors welcomed all this evidence of positive and substantial investment in boarding accommodation.

Inspectors did nonetheless note repeated areas of inconsistency in the quality of accommodation standards, arising from a combination of both inadequate furnishings and fittings and unsatisfactory attention to cleaning and tidiness, examples of which are given later under this and subsequent accommodation standards. Although the shortfalls noted did not present any immediate welfare risk to pupils or staff, they contributed to, at times, an unsatisfactorily and uninviting living environment for pupils. The picture was not totally bleak, as inspectors also saw areas where the living environment was well decorated, comfortable and equipped with new and up to date furniture and fittings. These actually highlighted the paucity of the less acceptable areas. Housemasters spoken to were mostly aware of the shortfalls and keen to address them, but felt limited by budgetary factors.

The following examples give a flavour what inspectors came across; further examples in relation to bathroom areas are given under standard 44.

The standard of basic cleanliness in the houses varied. Although it was clear the cleaning staff put in much effort to keep standards up, the size and layout of houses and the less than diligent attention on behalf of pupils to cleanliness and tidiness resulted in inspectors seeing repeated examples of grubby communal areas, kitchens and bathrooms in boarding houses, and individual pupil rooms that were not just untidy but also dirty. Inspectors also noted that strip light covers and light shades were often littered with dead flies and insects.

Furniture and carpets in communal areas were of variable quality. Old stained or dirty carpets were noted for example in parts of the communal areas of Nugent House and in the upper sixth common room in Chatham.

Grimy, worn and/or ripped furniture was noted in the Lyttleton main and upper 6th common rooms, and in common rooms in Chatham, Temple and Bruce.

Bedroom furniture in the majority of the older boys houses, although largely serviceable was old, worn and unattractive.

The school therefore really needs to ensure that, having addressed many of the underlying, and expensive infrastructure issues, that, in future, improved funding is allocated to ensuring

that the quality of the day to day living environment for pupils in boarding houses is raised to, and maintained at, a consistent level across all the areas in all boarding houses. The school acknowledged the need for this ongoing improvement of boarding facilities to ensure it can compete with the facilities offered by other comparable boarding schools and to manage the internal contrast that will inevitably arise, as, and when, the new boarding accommodation is built.

Alongside this investment the school needs to ensure closer monitoring of cleaning standards and may need to consider allocation of more cleaning hours, alongside a reinforcement of pupils' own ongoing responsibility to keep their personal and communal living areas clean and tidy.

Heating, lighting and ventilation were generally satisfactory, although the heating in older houses did present challenges, due to the age and condition of piping and radiator installations leading to occasional breakdowns. Suitable back up by portable heating devices was made available as required.

There was good reported attention to repairs and minor improvement works by the employed team of handymen who now had allocated time to spend in each house, which had led to improvements in the quality and speed of repair work undertaken, in the view of house staff.

Standard 41 (41.1 - 41.8)

Boarding accommodation is reserved for the use of those boarders designated to use it, and protected by access by the public.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Again, given the challenges posed by the layout and location of some of the boarding accommodation and the overall site, the school did reasonably well in protecting boarding areas from inappropriate intrusion by unauthorised staff and pupils and by the public.

The school site was extensive and not easily secured, especially given the level of public access to the National Trust gardens. Visitors to the site were however monitored via the front gatehouse and all car registrations recorded on video camera. The access gate was closed at night and monitoring of the grounds carried out by a night watchman. A system of visitor identification badges was in operation for official visitors and staff and pupils were encouraged to challenge anyone on the school site who was unfamiliar and not carrying suitable visitor identification.

Access to individual boarding areas and house was controlled, as far as possible, by key coded doors, although some parts of the houses located in the main Stowe House were difficult to isolate entirely. The laxness over house security during cleaning periods has already been noted.

Standard 42 (42.1 - 42.14)

Sleeping accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders accommodated, with appropriate separation between genders, age groups and from accommodation for adults.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Sleeping accommodation was provided in a variety of forms in the different houses. In the boys houses the intake year was typically accommodated in larger dorms accommodating up to 12 pupils. This was also the case for two of the houses for fourth form boys, which was the cause of some complaint from pupils and parents. Inspectors would support the intention of the housemasters to phase out these larger dorms for this age group and provide smaller more private facilities.

As pupils progressed through the school they were provided with smaller shared and then usually individual accommodation for their sixth form years.

The larger dorms were seen to offer reasonable space with no complaints about overcrowding received from pupils or parents and were mostly in a reasonable state of decor and tidiness, although storage space for personal belongings was limited. The space available in the smaller shared and individual rooms varied between houses but was not seen by inspectors to be unreasonable, though please note the comments below about bed sizes. Sleeping accommodation was adequately lit, ventilated and heated allowing for the occasional eccentricities of the ageing pipework. Supplementary heating was available for use when heating was inadequate or broken down

Pupils' sleeping accommodation was suitably separated on the basis of age and gender and staff accommodation in boarding houses was suitably separate from that for pupils.

There was scope in dorm areas for pupils to personalise areas immediately around their bed space and older pupils had fairly free rein, within reasonable boundaries of acceptable taste, to customise their accommodation to their personal preferences. Although there were some cabin bed arrangements the school did not make use of more traditional bunk beds

Some complaint was received from pupils about the comfort and small size of some of the beds, which were probably built for a generation of less ample and shorter pupils. Inspectors felt that beds were generally adequately comfortable and stable but some were quite short, especially those for younger pupils. The school indicated bigger or extended beds could be made available where required, but this message did not appear to have got through to pupils and may need reinforcement. The size of some of the smaller rooms may inhibit installation of bigger beds, so more flexible use of the range of sleeping accommodation may be needed to address this problem.

Standard 43 (43.1 - 43.2)**Suitable facilities for both organised and private study are available to boarders.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

There was satisfactory provision for study either in boarding houses or in the main school. Separate prep/study areas were provided for third and fourth formers in houses and these were satisfactorily equipped with desks, shelves and access to computers. Older pupils tended to study in their own rooms, which again had desk space and linkage to the school's computer network. Pupils could make use of the school library for study.

Standard 44 (44.1 - 44.10)

Adequate toilet and washing facilities are readily accessible to boarders, with appropriate privacy.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met? 2

Although difficult to measure precisely, due to the complex layout of some of the boarding house areas, inspectors judged that, overall, the school met the requirements in terms of pupil ratios for the numbers of toilets and showers/baths provided for boarders; certainly no concerns about availability of toilet or bathroom facilities in boarding areas was raised by pupils, staff or parents. Some incidental sharing of facilities by different ages did occasionally occur, but not to a degree inspectors considered inappropriate.

The only comment made about inadequacy of the number of toilet facilities was raised in relation to the lack of male pupil toilets in the school's science block. Although this strictly falls outside the remit of boarding house provision the school should look into this concern to ensure adequate provision is available.

Appropriately separate toilet and bathroom facilities were available for staff in boarding and main school areas.

The school had significantly improved the quality and extent of boarding house bathroom facilities since the last full welfare inspection, a good example being the new installations for the 5th formers in Temple House, which was pleasing to see. However some areas of shortfall were still noted by inspectors, related to a combination of the nature of some the facilities provided, alongside unsatisfactory attention to cleaning standards.

Some general concerns about the temperature of showers and the adequacy of flow were received from pupils but inspectors felt that the overall provision was adequate and reasonable particularly given the problems in the plumbing of the older houses.

The following particular areas of concern did however need attention by the school.

Inspectors saw repeated evidence of build ups of mould, grime and limescale in bathroom areas indicating an unsatisfactory cleaning regime; examples of this were seen in Grafton, Walpole, and Lyttleton houses. This reinforces the points made under standard 40 regarding improvements in cleaning arrangements.

The shower room on the middle floor of Grafton House was in generally poor condition and needed attention.

The privacy of shower cubicle doors was variable and numerous complaints from pupils were received on this front. Examples of this were seen in Nugent and the 4th form showers in Chatham. The school needs to explore options for better screening of shower doors.

A rather anomalous juxtaposition of toilet and bath facilities in Chatham House was noted which compromised the privacy of both facilities. This was unsatisfactory and needed to be addressed promptly.

The main bathroom facilities for 5th form pupils in one part of Cobham House were unsatisfactory, as they had to rely on the use of the ground floor boot room

changing/showering area used by a large number of pupils during the day, which became very dirty and untidy as a consequence.

Standard 45 (45.1 - 45.3)

Suitable changing provision is provided for use by day.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Specific daytime changing provision for sports was available in the boarding houses and/or in the particular sports facilities being used on the school site. While generally acceptable in terms of facilities provided, inspectors noted and confirmed the repeated comment of pupils on questionnaires that these areas were often became very dirty and smelly during the course of the day and were not particularly pleasant to use.

Inspectors also received particular comment from pupils that the junior boot room showers in Grenville House were not working effectively and about the limited level of privacy offered by the showers in the Chatham junior changing areas, both of which the school should look into.

Pupils also criticised the changing provision in the swimming pool complex but inspectors were made aware of the plans for reprovisioning of this facility in the near future.

Standard 46 (46.1 - 46.6)

Boarders have access to a range and choice of safe recreational areas, both indoors and outdoors.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The school had extensive grounds and recreation facilities in boarding houses and across the school site, which boarders could use both in and out of school time.

Separate common room areas were available for younger and older age groups in boarding houses, although those for the younger age ranges tended to be somewhat busy and cramped at times when all pupils were present. As already noted older pupils had access to facilities such as the 6th form club and separate common room on site. There was appropriate access for all ages to boarding houses outside of designated school time.

Pupils had access to the relevant school facilities to pursue their respective sports and leisure interests both in and out of school time and the extensive and attractive school grounds offered ample opportunity for quiet space and contemplation away from the bustle of the boarding houses

There was guidance in the staff handbook on procedures and guidelines for inviting pupils to their own private accommodation, which required formal notification to, and approval from, the housemaster concerned beforehand.

Standard 47 (47.1 - 47.9)

Indoor and outdoor areas used by, or accessible to, boarders should be free from reasonably avoidable safety hazards.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

The school had extensive systems in place for the monitoring and evaluation of many aspects of health and safety matters. Health and safety was largely the responsibility of identified senior bursary staff and the school also had regular input from a specialist firm of health and safety consultants to support their practice. A health and safety policy was in place and good attention was paid to risk assessments and induction training relating to manual staff safety in carrying out their various duties in boarding and school settings. This covered for example COSHH information and hazards in the use of cleaning materials, use of stepladders for cleaning and maintenance etc.

Good attention was paid to the checking of portable electrical appliances and the use of plug adaptors by boarders. Regular maintenance checks of gas and electrical systems were undertaken by specialist contractors and a through system of checking the water supply systems was in place to reduce the risk of legionella.

In touring the boarding and school premises inspectors did however note a number of areas of potential risk that appeared either not to have been assessed and/or addressed.

Some of the roadways around the school were in a poor state of repair with extensive potholing posing risk to both vehicles and pedestrians. Inspectors were informed this was source of a contention between the school and English Heritage who were responsible for roadways, but had been slow in responding to repair requests from the school. Inspectors would support the school in bringing these matters to the attention of English Heritage once again for urgent resolution.

Inspectors noted inconsistencies in the installation of window opening limiters on upper floor windows of boarding houses, Cobham and Temple houses were particular examples and there appeared not to be a record of risk assessment of this area of risk. A full risk assessment of upper floor windows needed undertaking to establish the potential levels of risk and to identify any remedial action required in line with the expectations of standard 47.3

Inspectors noted risk assessments were in place for recreational areas such as the ornamental lakes and swimming pool and in relation to activities such as rifle shooting, but there were not, for example, any recorded assessments in evidence around the use of hot plates, microwaves and other kitchen equipment to which pupils had free and ready access in boarding houses. This led inspectors to question whether a full audit of potential risks present in boarding houses and related activities had been carried out in line with the expectations of standard 47.9. Inspectors were also unclear as to how and when regular checks of the safety of the physical environment were carried out.

As these matters required further clarification a further visit to the school will be arranged by inspectors to speak to the relevant staff. Should any specific further recommendations arise these will be addressed in a supplementary report to the school.

Standard 48 (48.1 - 48.4)
Suitable accommodation should be available for the separate care of boarders who are ill.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
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As noted earlier in this report (see standard 16) the school had a sanatorium, which could accommodate up to 17 sick pupils. Some houses had separate dedicated rooms adjacent to matrons' accommodation for less seriously ill pupils who just needed short periods of rest and recuperation.

While the accommodation seen in boarding houses was satisfactory, inspectors noted the rather outdated design and décor of the sanatorium, which provided limited scope for separation by age and gender, and individual privacy around bed areas was only achieved by the use of portable screens. There was also no call bell system (as already noted), nor any fitted aids and adaptations in bathroom and toilet areas, such as g to assist pupils who might have temporarily limited mobility.

Senior school staff indicated there were longer-term plans to re-provision the sanatorium in more suitable and updated accommodation. Inspectors would strongly support this intention and advise that in the meantime attention is paid both to a call bell system and seeks the advice of an occupational therapist in relation to the need for installation of basic mobility aids in toilet and bathroom areas of the sanatorium.

Standard 49 (49.1 - 49.3)
Adequate laundry provision is made for boarders' clothing and bedding.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Laundry arrangements at the school were satisfactory with regular and reliable collection and return of bedding, laundry and personal clothing from boarding houses. Matrons oversaw what appeared to be effective systems for storing laundered clothes and ensuring return to the right pupils.

Standard 50 (50.1 - 50.2)
Boarders are able to obtain minor necessary personal and stationery items while accommodated at school.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The school shop on site had an appropriate range of personal items and stationery for pupils to purchase. In addition pupils had access, at differing levels depending on age, to local shops in Buckingham.

Standard 51 (51.1 - 51.11)

Any lodgings arranged by the school to accommodate pupils provide satisfactory accommodation and supervision, are checked by the school before use, and are monitored by the school during use.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

2

The school did not take a role in arranging or providing lodgings for pupils. However as part of the disciplinary procedure it was potentially possible for pupils to be 'internally rusticated' and live temporarily with specially identified staff members in their own accommodation. Inspectors recommended that a full assessment of such accommodation be undertaken, kept on record and updated as necessary, as if it were a lodgings arrangement. This will ensure the school can evidence it has fully assessed the safety and appropriateness of these temporary alternative accommodation arrangements in line with the expectations of this standard.

Standard 52 (52.1 - 52.8)

Any off-site short-stay accommodation arranged by the school for any of its boarders provides satisfactory accommodation and supervision, is checked by the school before use (although this may not be feasible when accommodation is in private households), and is monitored by the school during use.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The school had appropriate processes in place for assessing short stay accommodation used either abroad or in the UK for field trips. This was overseen by one of the senior staff with wide experience in running overseas trips and conducting risk assessments. Where feasible the school made repeated use of accommodation and facilities previously visited. Occasional use of exchange placements in private households was made and the school drew on the vetting and assessments of these placements carried out by the educational establishment with whom the exchange facility was arranged.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

[Empty box for Lay Assessor's Summary]

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____

Date _____

PART D

HEAD'S RESPONSE

D.1 Head's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 7th – 11th March 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

The School would like to record it's gratitude for the way that the CSCI Inspection was conducted between 7th – 11th March 2005. The Inspectors, let by Mr Rob Smith, were sensitive to the nuances of a large Independent boarding school and the School regards the Report as a fair summary of their findings. The Headmaster, and his Senior Management Team, are pleased that the overall tenor of the Report is positive and that the Inspectors recognised that the dedicated and hard-working staff provide high levels of pastoral care. We are particularly pleased that most of the pupils are happy, and know that they can turn to a responsible adult when they need advice or assistance. The School accepts the recommendations identified by the Inspectors as points which require improvement and I enclose an Action Plan which demonstrates that we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that all the Boarding Standards are fully met. I trust that the Action Plan will meet with the CSCI's approval.

Action taken by the CSCI in response to Head's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary

NO

Comments were received from the Head

YES

Head's comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

NO

Head's comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

YES

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan, which indicates how recommended actions and advisory recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Head's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the recommended actions in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the recommended actions and required further discussion

NO

Head has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

D.3 HEAD'S

AGREEMENT

Head's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I _____ of Stowe School confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the recommended actions made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of Stowe School am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Head both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

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