

Lathallan School

School Care Accommodation Service

Brotherton Castle
Johnshaven
Montrose
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Telephone: 01561 362 220

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
22 September 2023

Service provided by:
Lathallan Schools Limited

Service provider number:
SP2003003564

Service no:
CS2006114349

About the service

Lathallan is an independent co-educational school, offering Nursery, Primary and Secondary education. The school is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a school care accommodation service to a maximum of 40 pupils.

The school ethos states:

'Our main aim is for each young person passing through our school doors to discover and develop themselves, and leave as accomplished young adults prepared for life after school'.

Boarding state their 'focus is to look after your children as best we can. We fully support them in all aspects of their time here - creating a warm, fun-filled, homely environment where their welfare is our top priority'.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Monday 11 and Tuesday 12 September 2023. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with almost all boarding students
- spoke with boarding staff and the Headmaster
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with the Chair of the Board of Governors.

Key messages

- There was a strong culture of care and nurture throughout the boarding team, which focussed on seeking the best possible outcomes for students.
- Students were encouraged to participate fully in all aspects of school life, both during the school day and on evenings and weekends.
- Students were encouraged to share their views on all aspects of boarding.
- Support plans should be in place for students who need these to inform their care and support.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	4 - Good
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?

4 - Good

We made an overall evaluation of good for this key question, as there were a number of important strengths, which taken together clearly outweighed areas for improvement. Whilst some improvements were needed, the strengths identified had a positive impact on the young people's experiences and outcomes.

Children were kept emotionally and physically safe. Boarding students stated that the boarding house was a safe place with various ways they could share their views and voice any concerns. All young people could identify at least one safe adult within the boarding team, or wider school, who they would speak to if they needed support.

The majority of boarders told us that they were confident that the adults around them would deal with bullying effectively. Students who had additional responsibilities had training regarding anti-bullying. It would also be helpful if these students received safeguarding training as they provided an important role in offering younger students advice and guidance. We heard that the boarding staff were approachable and responded sensitively to any concerns raised. Young people were therefore likely to share any concerns in the knowledge these would be treated seriously.

Staff understood their responsibilities in relation to child protection. A safeguarding procedure was accessible to all staff with boarding and teaching staff having annual training. There was an identified child protection officer and staff who had completed child protection co-ordinator training. This ensured all staff understood the importance of keeping students safe.

Students benefitted from clear boundaries and expectations. They told us that these were consistent, fair and reasonable and that responses to personal concerns were nurturing and supportive. We also heard that any concerns or complaints raised were responded to quickly, sensitively and resolved where possible.

Some aspects of the boarding rooms had been upgraded with plans for the remaining dormitories and communal areas. The outdoor environment within the school grounds offered superb opportunities to connect with nature and the school animals, and for exercise and relaxation, all of which were important to good physical and mental health.

There was a highly structured environment that placed importance on both educational achievement and personal growth. Young people told us they had enough downtime and they felt that the activities they had access to were plentiful and interesting. One young person told us that, "You get to do lots of fun stuff" and that the "Activities are good and the team building aspect of boarding is good".

Students were encouraged to share their views on all aspects of boarding. Regular meetings were held with the staff team and boarder meetings held by senior students. Students told us they valued the opportunity to meet with older students and peers as this offered more informal means of raising any issues, worries or concerns. They were confident their opinions were heard and generally lead to change.

Boarders generally felt that the food available to them was tasty, varied and well-balanced and promoted their health and wellbeing. They had the opportunity to give feedback on meals and food choices directly to the chef and had enjoyed cooking meals with the chef and learning vital skills for their future lives. All boarding students had the opportunity to do their own laundry, though this could be encouraged more for older students who would be moving onto live independently.

Students were well supported by boarding and teaching staff who knew them well and understood their individual needs. They were encouraged to participate fully in all aspects of school life, both during the school day and on evenings and weekends. Allocated tutors provided educational and emotional support, additional to the care and nurturing approach of the boarding team. Students were highly complimentary about life at Lathallan School.

There was a strong culture of care and nurture throughout the boarding team, which focussed on seeking the best possible outcomes for students. The Head of Boarding had made real progress in creating a caring, consistent, predictable environment where students understood expectations and boundaries. These were consistent with boarders' handbooks and the development plan, which highlighted the support the staff team could offer boarders at Lathallan. Staff were available to students, and we heard that young people were confident at seeking out support (whether this be for their physical or emotional health) during the night if required.

Boarding staff knew students well, and thought and consideration was given into how to provide the best support. Health related chronologies allowed matrons to identify and respond to health needs effectively. Pertinent information was gathered at the point of admission, however, this was not used to allow the required strategies of support to be proactively implemented, and to inform personal support plans. This would allow the team to track any on-going need and respond appropriately, and consistently and to monitor positive progress. **(See 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement since the last inspection' in this report')**

The Board of Governors had good oversight of various aspects of school life. It would be beneficial if an identified member of the Board had a specific remit for the boarding provision and that students had the opportunity to meet with Governors to provide an additional layer of safeguarding and scrutiny. **(See area for improvement 1.)**

We found that staff were safely recruited with appropriate references and Disclosure checks, however, not all staff were registered with an appropriate professional body. To ensure the wellbeing of students the organisation must recognise the requirement for professional registration within safe recruitment procedures. **(See 'What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement since the last inspection' in this report'.)**

Staff confidently delivered quality support and care to students. There was a mandatory training plan, which was detailed in staff's personal performance plans. This also highlighted future training needs and plans. Focussed staff support provided a structure for reflection and development based on each staff members individual role and learning needs.

There were structures in place to evaluate students experiences through gathering their views, feedback and what they would like improved about boarding. This feedback was valued, and we heard from young people that improvements had been made based on their feedback. Students feedback directly influenced the boarding house development plan. There was continued consideration about the best ways of meaningfully gathering their views and the views of parents. The Head of Boarding met with Heads of other departments across school to ensure the boarding aspect of school life was well represented.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure an additional layer of safeguarding and scrutiny there should be a member of the board of governors with a specific remit for the boarding provision. Students should be familiar with this individual and have the opportunity to share their views or concerns with them.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

Support plans should inform the agreed and identified strategies of care and support for individual pupils. They should be readily accessible to all staff who have a key pastoral role.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices' and 'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work well together' (HSCS 1.15 and 3.19).

This area for improvement was made on 27 June 2018.

Action taken since then

Support plans had not been developed for the students who needed these (see report).

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 2

The school should consider the longer term development plans for boarding accommodation and how this can be improved to provide students with more suitable accommodation.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I experience a high quality environment if the organisation provides the premises' (HSCS 5).

This area for improvement was made on 26 June 2018.

Action taken since then

Improvements had been made to the boarding accommodation with a programme of refurbishment. There were no current plans for changes to the structure of the boarding accommodation to improve privacy and have more accessible toilets.

This area for improvement has only partly been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 3

Systems should be developed to ensure that communal areas of the school are maintained to a high standard of cleanliness. Students should be supported to develop life skills and have greater responsibility for maintaining their rooms to a reasonable standard of tidiness.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that:

'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5:22).

This area for improvement was made on 26 June 2018.

Action taken since then

Since the last inspection there had been opportunities for students to develop life skills and take some responsibility for their rooms. Rooms were seen to be well enough maintained.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

A training plan should be developed which identifies the relevant training boarding staff should complete, and to ensure this meets the training requirements of their registered professional body.

Notification should be made to the SSSC of the current roles of the staff registered with them.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

This area for improvement was made on 26 June 2018.

Action taken since then

The Head of Boarding should contact the Scottish Social Services Council to discuss the professional qualification requirements of individual staff. This would inform a training plan. All boarding staff must be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (or another professional body) within six months of their employment (see report).

This area for improvement has not been met and remains in place.

Previous area for improvement 5

The Care Inspectorate must be notified of accidents and incidents as detailed within 'Records all Services (excluding CM) Must Keep and Notification Reporting Guidance'.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 26 June 2018.

Action taken since then

Appropriate notifications appeared to have been made to the Care Inspectorate, though these were unusually low in number.

This area for improvement has been met

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	4 - Good
7.1 Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life	5 - Very Good
7.2 Leaders and staff have the capacity and resources to meet and champion children and young people's needs and rights	4 - Good

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