

Aysgarth School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Stewart Waddell
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Aysgarth School is an independent boarding and day school. It was founded in 1877 and is situated on the outskirts of the village of Newtown Le Willow, near Bedale, in North Yorkshire. The school ethos is based on Christian values and principles and boarders attend regular church services in the school's own chapel. The boarding accommodation is provided in one boarding house sited on the upper floors of the main school building. The school provides accommodation for male boarders only and currently accommodates 107 boarders whose ages range from eight to 13 years of age. The school currently has boarders of differing nationalities.

Summary

The purpose of this key inspection was to assess all 29 key standards of the Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards, thus assessing all six sections contained in this report. At the time of inspection there were 107 young people boarding at the school, housed in the school's dormitories. The inspector met with groups of boarders from each form year and spoke to many individually. The school ensure boarders' health needs are very well met. They are very well cared for, kept safe from abuse, and live in a safe environment. Their educational and recreational needs are very well met and they are very well supported by pastoral staff. The school provides suitable accommodation and boarding facilities for boarders, and has excellent recreational facilities available for boarders use. The boarding provision is very well managed and monitored.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has taken actions to address all the recommendations made at the Commission for Social Care Inspection in 2005. Three of the recommendations referred to amendments to administration systems and documentation and five to minor improvements and alterations required to the facilities. Evidence was viewed that showed all recommendations had been acted upon and suitably addressed. There have been significant improvements to the boarding facilities in various areas. Since the last inspection, a new housemaster has been appointed and the school has further developed their boarding house practices, polices, and updated training, supervision and induction training programmes for boarding house staff.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school has established excellent working links with a local medical practice and all boarders are registered. The school nurse can contact the practice at any time for advice and guidance and is allocated an appointment time each Friday during term time to attend and discuss any health issues. Appointments for boarders with doctors and other medical health specialists are organised when required. The school ensures boarders with specific health needs are very well supported. The boarding house has its own nurse's surgery, sickbay and duty room, all sited adjacent to each other. The nurse holds daily surgeries that any boarders who are feeling unwell may attend. Issues such as sexual health, HIV, Aids and misuse of illegal substances are fully covered as part of the school's educational curriculum; the school's pastoral care staff discuss these with young people and the school nurse runs regular sexual health clinics for boarders. Young people were very positive in their comments about the care provided to them when they

are unwell. The school can secure dental treatment for boarders using local emergency dental clinics. Young people stated they got to see a dentist 'straight away' if they had toothache. The school nurse carries out eyesight and hearing tests on each boarder on admission and, where necessary, would refer to specialists for further treatment. The school check each boarder's height and weight once a term and keep accurate records of such checks. The school has appropriate written policies covering medical and health issues. The school nurse holds appropriate qualifications for her role. All boarding house staff receive first aid training with some having completed the four-day first aid at work course. The school ensures the boarding house has at least one member of staff with a current first aid qualification on duty at all times. The school nurse is available at all times for advice and guidance. No boarders self medicate. The school has suitable written policies on the administration of non-prescription medication that details which medications may be administered. Written records are kept of all medication, treatment and first aid administered to boarders, and of all significant illnesses, accidents or injuries to boarders. The school keep detailed, computerised medical records on each boarder on the school database. Documentation used for recording medication administered does not contain a record of the exact time medication was administered. All medication is appropriately stored in suitable lockable cabinets and a lockable medication fridge, sited in a secure room in the boarding house. A detailed record is kept of the contents of them. All relevant staff have received appropriate training in safe medication procedures and this is updated annually. A senior member of staff checks all medication records weekly. First aid boxes are available at various locations throughout the school and these are regularly checked and re-stocked by the school nurse. Not all entries in medication records and medical logbooks have been signed by staff making them. The school obtains written parental permission for the administration of medical treatment, first aid and prescribed and non-prescribed medication to boarders. The school's referral application form for boarders contains a comprehensive medical questionnaire designed to ensure the school obtain all relevant medical information on boarders before admission. Should the information not be received via the application form the school contact parents directly. The school nurse ensures any relevant information received is communicated to boarding house staff and all other relevant personnel. The school ensures young people have access to menus that offer a balanced, healthy and nutritious diet. A local company of specialist caterers supplies the catering at the school. Menus ensure the school follow a healthy eating programme and offer young people nutritious, healthy meals. Staff stated boarder's food preferences were taken in to account when menus were being compiled and boarders spoken to were very positive in their comments about the meals provided. Boarders' views on the food provided and menus offered are regularly sought through the school council. Boarders take all meals in the school dining room, and no food is prepared in the boarding house. The inspector dined with pupils on two occasions during the inspection and the meals offered were well prepared and well presented. The school keep a detailed record of any food allergies boarders may have and ensure all staff are suitably informed of these. The school ensure options are available at all meal times. Specialist diets are catered for and specialist foodstuffs obtained if required. Boarders learn to prepare and cook food during school cookery lessons. They have been involved in developing a small vegetable garden and growing their own vegetables, as well as helping to produce 'Aysgarth Apple Juice' from apples collected from apple trees in the school grounds. Staff detailed how the school are working with specific boarders with identified eating disorders and how the school addresses such issues with boarders in general. The school dining room is suitably furnished and decorated, and is of sufficient size to cater for all pupils and staff using them. There is sufficient time allocated at all meal times for boarders to get and eat their meals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Bullying was not a concern or issue for boarders. The individual views of over 107 young people were obtained through pre-inspection questionnaires, meetings between the inspector and groups of boarders from each form group, and discussions between the inspector and individual boarders. Boarders were positive in their comments stating 'bullying did not occur at the school'. Several stated 'it would not be allowed'. No boarder raised any complaint or concern about any sort of physical bullying. The school has good anti bullying policies in place that give clear information for staff, including guidance on what constitutes bullying, varying types of bullying and key times when bullying may occur. The policy also details how to work with those who may bully others. Staff are extremely diligent about such issues and boarders were very positive in their comments about how staff addressed any concerns they had about things such as name-calling. All boarders receive a copy of the school diary each term and it contains a section about bullying, advising boarders what to do if they feel they are being bullied. The school ensures all staff receive child protection training, and that such training is regularly updated. Boarders who are elected as prefects and dorm captains also receive child protection training. The school has good written policies on child protection issues that provide clear information and guidance for staff and details for them what to do should they have any child protection concerns. The policy informs staff they have the right to take any child protection concerns they may have directly to relevant child protection agencies. The headmaster is the named person for child protection issues and he has received appropriate training for this role. There are no current child protection issues or concerns at the school. The school has very good behaviour management policies and procedures in place. Boarders stated that staff were 'very fair' and said that the disciplinary systems were 'fair'. Boarders show a very good knowledge of the school's rules and guidelines and clearly detailed for the inspector what sanctions may be imposed should they break those rules. Most boarders said sanctions were 'very rarely' applied. Behaviour management policies clearly detail what sanctions are permissible for staff to use. Boarding house staff were observed to work very well with young people and treat them fairly and with respect, showing there are good working relationships between staff and boarders. The school keep a detailed record of any major sanctions given, detailing why disciplinary measures have been taken and the outcomes for young people. Boarders and their parents have rights of appeal to serious disciplinary measures imposed and any such measure would only be imposed after discussion and due deliberation by the school's senior staff. The school has a suitable, written policy on physical interventions entitled 'Policy on the Use of Force to Restrain Pupils' and a further policy called 'Physical contact with pupils in other circumstances'. The policies detail clearly when it may be permissible to use physical intervention with young people. No physical interventions have taken place since the last boarding inspection of the school in 2005. All staff have received basic fire safety training. Fire services carried out a full inspection of the premises in October 2007 and found everything to be satisfactory. Boarding house staff are fully aware of fire evacuation procedures and regular fire drills are held; the last such drill being held on in October 2008. Boarders are made fully aware of safe evacuation procedures and some boarders explained to the inspector exactly what these procedures were. All fire alarms, emergency lighting and fire safety equipment are tested regularly with good written records kept of all such checks. The school staff handbook contains suitable policies on privacy and confidentiality for staff and specific policies on such issues relating to boarding. Staff were observed using work practices that ensure boarders privacy is respected. Boarders have no complaints about lack of privacy or confidentiality. All washing and toilet areas are

suitably maintained and decorated. All doors on toilet facilities had appropriate locks on them to ensure privacy for boarders using them. The school follow recruitment processes that ensure they meet the requirements of the Boarding School National Minimum Standards. Good records are kept to show all required checks, such as Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosures (CRBs), have been carried out and appropriate certificates received. Files viewed show suitable references are obtained and verified, and suitable documentation is on file to confirm employee's identity and the qualifications they have obtained. Covering (GAP) staff employed at the school are recruited from an agency that ensures all relevant checks are carried out on the employees before they start work at the school. All main entry doors to the main school building have keypad entry. All doors with access to the school buildings are locked at 8.20pm each night. Entry to the boarding accommodation is by one staircase that is sited in the centre of the main school building and to enter the sleeping accommodation it is necessary to pass the staff duty room and nurses surgery, adding to the security of the accommodation. Staff ensure any adult visitors to the boarding accommodation are not allowed substantial unsupervised access to boarders. The school ensures any outside person working with boarders or other pupils on a regular basis are suitably CRB checked, and have ensured the taxi driver regularly used by the school has been appropriately CRB checked. All adults not employed by the school living on site are suitably CRB checked and the school's policy is that these adults must fully acquaint themselves with the school's child protection policy. The school has good health and safety procedures and policies in place and have access to advice on health and safety issues from a specialist from the Health & Safety Executive, who carried out a health and safety audit of the premises in April 2008. Relevant risk assessments are in place and are regularly reviewed. Risk assessments of the boarding accommodation are carried out and reviewed regularly. The housemaster carries out a health and safety check of the boarding house once a term, ensuring regular monitoring. Risk assessments are carried out for all activity trips and outings. All electrical installations and appliances are patent tested annually. All gas installations are safety checked annually, safety certificates obtained, and annual safety checks of the school's water systems carried out. The school's health and safety committee meet once per term. The person with responsibility for overseeing health and safety has had appropriate training for the role. Good written records of all health and safety checks are kept.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All boarders spoken to said they had at least one member of staff they would take any complaint, problem or issue they had to. Boarders stated the housemaster and boarding staff 'always listen to you and help'. The school diary positively encourages boarders to raise any concerns they have stating 'do not be afraid to complain - we want you to be happy'. All boarders are allocated a personal form tutor whom they have access to regularly. The inspector observed several pupils go individually to boarding house staff, the school nurse or school staff and talk with them privately. A feature of the school is that boarders are ably supported by fellow boarders. This is aided by the school's system of electing boarders as dormitory captains, school prefects and representatives to the school council. Some boarders stated they might also discuss any concerns they have with other boarders, dorm captains or prefects. Boarders have access to the school's independent listener, whose name and details on how to contact them are contained in the school diary. Boarders were very positive in their comments about the staff who worked with them and the level of care and support they receive at the school. The school has suitable policies on issues such as discrimination, racism and equal opportunities. The school's documentation, various booklets and guides contain commitments to equality,

tolerance of others, and fairness for all. Boarders of differing nationalities and cultures board at the school and the school's ethos, stated in various policies, is one of understanding and acceptance. Five foreign students currently board at the school and those spoken to stated they were 'very happy' at the school, enjoyed boarding, and had not been subject to any sort of discrimination. Boarding accommodation is organised in a way that ensures boarders from varied backgrounds, nationalities and cultures share dorms. No boarders spoken to, or in any of the 107 completed questionnaires they returned, had any complaints to make that they were unfairly discriminated against. Issues such as discrimination, racism and equality, and an understanding of differing cultures, religions and beliefs, are very well covered through the school curriculum in lessons such as PHSE and Religious Studies. Staff regularly discuss such issues with boarders and the inspector observed an excellent presentation to the whole school on racism written and performed by the boarders themselves.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The views of boarders are sought regularly using a number of forums such as the school council, dorm captains weekly meetings with the housemaster and a suggestions and complaints box sited centrally in one of the main school corridors. Each form group elect a representative to the school council. The council meets twice per term. Each meeting is followed up by a 'feedback meeting'. The inspector attended such a meeting where elected boarders representatives met with the housemaster for a very frank and open meeting where boarders received direct answers to all the issues they had raised at the school council meeting. Each representative must report the outcomes of all meetings to their whole form group at the individual form group meetings. Good written records are kept of school council meetings. The school use various other ways to gather boarders' views and opinions and boarders were observed discussing issues with various staff on several occasions during the inspection. All boarders are allocated a personal form tutor whom they meet with regularly. Boarders compile their own 'Aysgarth Boarders Weekly' web site magazine, which parents and others can access through the school's web site. Boarders were very positive about the opportunities they had to put their views forward and stated they could raise any requests they wished through school council. Some boarders detailed requests they had made that had been considered and granted. Staff ensure they are aware of where all boarders are at all times. Staff carry out a final roll call at bedtime checking all dorms to ensure all boarders are present and accounted for. There are three telephones available specifically for boarders use sited in various areas of the boarding house that offer suitable privacy. The school policy is that boarders are not allowed mobile phones. Boarders hand their mobile phones in to staff for safekeeping if they bring them back to school after holidays or exeat weekends. Boarders spoken to had no complaints about this policy and all stated they could use the telephones in the boarding house whenever they wish and they did not have to ask staff permission to do so. Boarders also have good access to e-mail facilities to send e-mails. Boarders may send and receive letters and all boarders write home each Sunday if they are not at home for the weekend, with the school supplying the envelopes and stamps for this. Parents may visit boarders if they wish and all parents are kept fully informed of any significant concerns regarding their child. All boarders have exeat weekends at least once each half term. The school has very good policies and practices in place relating to the induction of new boarders. Some 35 new boarders started at the school in September 2008, five weeks before this inspection. The inspector spoke with several of them during the inspection and all stated they had 'settled in well' and were 'enjoying boarding'. Some described ways in which staff and other boarders had made them feel welcome and 'helped them to settle in'. In the 107 completed pre-inspection

questionnaires returned, boarders were positive in their comments about how they were helped to settle in to the school. Staff spoken to detailed how they try to ensure young people settle in, and how they address any issues of 'homesickness' boarders may have. The school organise a 'new boys weekend' in the summer term before new boarders come to the school where most new boarders come for a 'taster' visit to the school that includes an overnight stay. The new boarders are allocated a current boarder as a guide for this weekend. All new boarders receive a new boys booklet detailing the practices, rules and guidelines of the boarding house and details of a typical day for a boarder. The booklet also gives advice on who boarders should contact if they have any problems or concerns. The headmaster writes to all new boarders and their parents welcoming them to the school and informing them which dorm the new boarders will be in.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders spoken to stated keeping their possessions safe was not an issue or concern for them, and no boarder spoken to had ever had anything stolen. All boarders have an individual lockable storage box, kept in their form common rooms, in which they can store valuables, although most spoken to also said they rarely used these as they can 'leave any stuff safely' in their dorms. All boarders have adequate storage space for clothing and other items. Boarders are not allowed to hold cash and parents are asked not to provide pocket monies. The school provides for all boarders needs and parents are billed directly for any extras required. Boarders spoken to support this system and one stated it was a good system as it 'treated everybody fairly and equally.' The school provides good facilities for boarders. All boarders spoken to were positive in their comments about the boarding house and very positive about the recreation and activity facilities provided. Since the last key inspection in 2005, a new housemaster has been appointed. The boarding house contains communal lounges, 19 dormitories, sickbay, surgery, duty room and bathroom, shower, washing and toilet facilities. It also contains some staff living quarters where some house staff reside. The boarding house is suitably decorated, furnished, and kept clean and tidy. The school allocates sleeping accommodation in a manner that encourages young people of differing backgrounds and nationalities to share dormitories, promoting interaction and understanding. Sleeping accommodation is provided in 19 dormitories, the smallest accommodating four boarders, the largest accommodating nine boarders. All dormitories allow boarders an amount of floor space that exceeds the minimum required by the Boarding School National Minimum Standards. Several boarders stated how much they enjoyed 'sharing their dorms with their friends'. In certain circumstances, boarders may be allowed to change rooms. To do this they must ask house staff and seek permission. Staff spoken to stated that boarders are encouraged and helped to sort out any issues they have with each other. Boarders spoken to all said the house staff were 'very good' at arranging dorms to ensure the mix of boarders in each dorm 'was good'. Some boarders stated you can ask staff if you can share with other boarders and this was taken in to consideration when staff did the dorm allocations. Boarders also stated it was very rare for anyone to request a change of room, a statement staff spoken to agreed with. Dormitories are allocated on an age basis with young people from the same or similar school year groups sharing. All washing and toilet areas are suitably maintained and decorated. The boarding house has sufficient numbers of toilets, baths, showers, urinals and wash hand basins for the maximum number of boarders they can accommodate.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school's documentation, various booklets and leaflets, outline the services offered by the school and the admissions criteria. The school's mission statement clearly states their commitment to the Christian faith and that the school practice Christian values, but expressly states they welcome applications from boys of all races and religions. The statement of boarding principles states the school aim to ensure the boarding provision offers a 'caring, disciplined and happy' environment for boarders. The school diary is updated each term and all boarders receive a new diary at the beginning of each term. All boarders' parents receive a parents handbook, which is updated annually, and contains details of all relevant procedures, practices and policies. The housemaster has introduced several positive changes to the boarding house structures and boarding care is very well managed and well monitored. The school ensures boarding house staff meet weekly and the housemaster meets with the head teacher frequently to discuss boarding issues. The housemaster meets with the school council regularly, and holds weekly meetings with dorm captains. The school keep detailed written records of all relevant incidents and the housemaster and head teacher regularly monitor all boarding related issues. Observation of evening duty shifts and viewing of staff duty rotas showed that there are sufficient staff on duty at all times to meet the needs of boarders. Systems are in place to ensure that staff know the whereabouts of all boarders at all times. There are suitable arrangements in place to enable the school to provide adequate cover for any staff absences or illness. The boarding staff team is made up of both male and female staff and duty rotas are compiled to ensure there are at least one male and one female staff on duty in the boarding house each night. The school has compiled job descriptions for all boarding house staff, including GAP staff, that clearly detail the staff's responsibilities. In addition, the school has compiled job descriptions for boarders who are prefects and dorm captains. The school's induction programme for all boarding house staff covers all required areas, including child protection. The school has introduced annual 'Individual Performance Reviews' for all boarding house staff. The housemaster has produced a detailed three year 'Boarding Development Plan' that contains plans for further training for boarding house staff. The school staff handbook is reviewed and updated annually and all staff receive a copy at the start of the academic year. The handbook contains all the relevant school's policies and procedures, including boarding house policies and procedures. New staff starting work during the academic year receive a copy of the handbook on commencement of employment. Staff have access to all policies and procedures through the school's intranet system. Boarders and their parents may also access all the school's policies and procedures through the school's comprehensive web site. The staff disciplinary policy includes provision to suspend staff pending investigation should an allegation be made against them.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that all entries made in medication logs, medical records and boarders health records are signed and dated by the person making the entry. (NMS 15)
- ensure that the documentation used to record the administration of prescribed medication is suitable for the purpose. (NMS 15)

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for boarding school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

Ofsted considers 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

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

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

Ofsted considers 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.

Annex A

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school (NMS 12)
- boarders receive personal support from staff (NMS 14)
- boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families (NMS 19)
- new boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in (NMS 21)
- boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school (NMS 30)
- there are sound relationships between staff and boarders (NMS 36)

Ofsted considers 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders' possessions and money are protected (NMS 20)
- boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation (NMS 40)
- boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation (NMS 42)
- boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities (NMS 44)
- boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day (NMS 45)
- boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school (NMS 50)

Ofsted considers 51 the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- a suitable statement of the school's principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff (NMS 1)
- there is clear leadership of boarding in the school (NMS 8)
- crises affecting boarders' welfare are managed effectively (NMS 9)
- the school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare (NMS 10)
- risk assessment and school record-keeping contribute to boarders' welfare (NMS 23)
- boarders are supervised adequately by staff (NMS 31)
- staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site (NMS 32)
- boarders are adequately supervised at night (NMS 33)
- boarders are looked after by staff which have specific boarding duties, and have received adequate induction and continued training (NMS 34)
- boarders are looked after by staff which follow clear boarding policies and practice (NMS 35)
- the welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 51)
- the welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

Ofsted considers 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.